

The MAKING of a MISSION- -ARY



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THE
MAKING OF A MISSIONARY

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*'TWO BASKETS HUNG BY CORDS OVER HIS
SHOULDERS.'*

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THE

574
MAKING OF A MISSIONARY

OR

DAYDREAMS IN EARNEST

BY

CHARLOTTE M. YONGE

AUTHOR OF

'THE HERD BOY AND HIS HERMIT' 'THE PATRIOTS OF PALESTINE'
ETC.

The Son of God goes forth to war
A kingly crown to gain,
His blood-red banner streams afar;
Who follows in His train?

BISHOP REGINALD HEBER

WITH FIVE FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS
BY W. S. STACEY

LONDON

NATIONAL SOCIETY'S DEPOSITORY

BROAD SANCTUARY, WESTMINSTER

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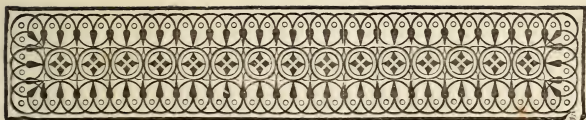
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P R E F A C E

THIS tale was begun, and indeed nearly completed, before China had become the scene of more than the sudden raids of fanatics, such as those Vegetarians who fell on the Stewart family and their helpers at Kucheng. Of the cruel persecution by the so-called Boxers, nothing then was known, and the war had only just begun when the last chapters were written. In fact, only the first attacks had then been made, and the terrible atrocities that followed were yet unperpetrated. The end is not yet come, but by the time this tale actually appears there will probably have been much more to lament, and thus far we can only feel that

The martyrs' glorious army still is ours

and join in the thanksgiving of the Church for Brooks, Robinson, and Norman, and the countless

Chinese Christians whose names we shall never know, but who have won their crowns in Paradise. For be it remembered that all agree that when a Chinese is converted, he is so from his heart, and in reality.

I have not attempted many Chinese scenes, for want of sufficient information as to the habits of the converts, and I have avoided names of persons, as it is dangerous to invent or to copy names from a language not understood ; and besides, the chief details to be had were from Southern China, where, though the written language is the same to the eye, a totally different dialect is spoken.

In fact, my object has rather been to trace the growth of the purpose of self-devotion, and what it may lead to when once the seed, however small, has been planted.

C. M. YONGE.

June 12, 1900.



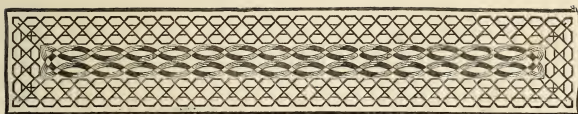


CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE LANTERN	11
II. THIRTY-FOLD	19
III. GREAT EXAMPLES	33
IV. COLD WATER	43
V. TURNED ASIDE	56
VI. HOME CARES	65
VII. MABEL'S NATIVE	76
VIII. THE BREAK-UP	86
IX. OLD FRIENDS	96
X. DEDICATION	108
XI. THE CHOICE	119

CHAPTER	PAGE
XII. CHURCH OR WORLD	131
XIII. THOSE AT HOME	141
XIV. THE ST. AUGUSTINE SCHOLAR	150
XV. THE LAND OF SINIM	160
XVI. TO THE FLOWERY LAND	173
XVII. SADNESS AND JOY	179
XVIII. WELCOME	193
XIX. THE BOWER OF BLISS	202
XX. MABEL'S VIEWS REALISED	209
XXI. MARTYRDOM	215

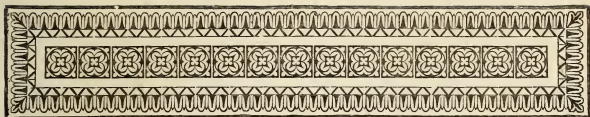




LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
'TWO BASKETS HUNG BY CORDS OVER HIS SHOULDERS'	<i>Frontispiece</i>
"'IS THAT ALL YOUR BAG?' DEMANDED HIS GRAND- FATHER"	45
THE KEEPER SUDDENLY APPEARS	84
EDWARD BRYANT AND HIS MOTHER	123
EDWARD BRYANT CAME OUT OF CHURCH BEHIND THEM	160





THE MAKING OF A MISSIONARY

CHAPTER I

THE LANTERN

In heathen lands afar
Gross darkness broodeth yet.
Arise, O morning star,
Arise, and never set.



LECTURE was being given in Lang-bridge school-room—illustrated by a magic lantern. There were Red Indians with feathers, wampum belts and mocassins, dancing wildly about their fires. By-and-by came a missionary wrapped in furs, on his sledge drawn by a little brisk pony. The men drew round him, as he stood under a large branching, snow-laden fir tree, and by-and-by in the

next group, the chieftain was pointing up to the sky, and the lecturer said he was declaring that, now they knew who the Great Spirit was, they would follow Him and renounce their heathenish and cruel practices. Then there appeared a lake enclosed by woodland, where the missionary in his surplice stood on steps to baptize the chief, going down into the water ; and the series closed with wigwams round a little church with a pine shingled roof. Another set of slides represented the India of the East, a monkey temple with comical apes in all positions, a faquir with nails grown through his clenched palm, and another swinging on hooks implanted in his naked sides. Old men carried down to die in the Ganges, with cowdung in their mouths. A widow laid on her pile as a Suttee, and especially the Car of Juggernaut, with the three horrid idols and the pilgrims lying down in its path to be crushed. Finally, the scene shifted to China, where pagoda roofs towered above trees, and, in the foreground, an unfortunate baby was being buried alive—looking so natural that some of the spectators began to cry before they were relieved by a missionary in a broad hat, and a lady in a big bonnet, who were bargaining for it and rescuing it.

To most of the beholders the scenes were only a succession of wonders, passing by them as if they had been only Alpine scenery, or Arctic views, with a due proportion of bears and shipwrecks and icebergs ; but there was one boy who stared at the stretch of his brown eyes, as he sat on a bench too low for him, propping his chin on his hand and his elbow on his knee. And when the concluding hymn was sung his young voice chimed in with :

Shall we whose lamp is lighted
With knowledge from on high,
Shall we to men benighted
The light of truth deny ?
Salvation, oh salvation,
The joyful sound proclaim
Till each remotest nation
Have learnt Messiah's name.

When the boy part of the audience had come scrambling and tumbling out, glad to be in the open air and moonlight, he was still humming it to himself ; but he waited a few moments till the quieter ones were coming out, each with a little pictured tract that had been put into their hands, and then, joining himself to two young girls in broad white hats, he said : 'Hollo, Aline ! hollo, Frances ! I thought I saw you there !'

‘Yes, we got leave to come. Wasn’t it nice?’ said the elder of the two maidens. The three were all about the same age, on each side of twelve years old.

‘Betsy was to take us home,’ said the other; ‘but I think she is gone off with her young man. You will see us home, Edward, then mamma won’t mind.’

So the three went along a broad path through the churchyard, where the rising moon made long shadows of the headstones. Edward began humming again—

Salvation, oh salvation,
The joyful sound proclaim.

‘How you have got that old thing into your head, Edward,’ said Frances.

‘Old thing! It is all like a real call,’ responded the boy. ‘Just fancy going and standing up before that horrible car, and spreading out one’s arms to the poor pilgrims and saying: “See here, ye poor deluded folk. Don’t worship those dreadful idols of death, but turn, turn to the living God of life and mercy.” He suited the action to the words, and stood with arms outspread and face lifted up. Aline gasped

with a touch of the same feeling ; but Frances laughed 'Very soon the car would run over you !'

'Then I should be a martyr ! The best of deaths.'

'Oh-h !' gasped Aline.

'Nonsense,' said Frances. 'There aren't martyrs now. The English police has put a stop to all *that*. Didn't you hear him say so ?'

'Yes,' added Aline. 'Now we British have got India we won't let the foolish people throw themselves under the car, nor the widows be burnt ! So it is all done, you see.'

'But those people are all in the dark. They want to be taught. Didn't you see the great map, with all the black heathen places ?'

'Where they bury the poor babies,' said Aline. But there was a mission lady saving one.'

'The joyful sound proclaim,' went on Edward. 'I'll tell you what—I mean to do it, I mean to be a missionary to the heathen !'

Both the girls received the announcement with a burst of laughter, and Frances said : 'It was to be a sailor last week, or a photographer. Which was it ?'

'I mean it this time,' said Edward. 'Don't

laugh, Frances, I do! And did you see who was helping him with the slides?’

‘I’m sure I didn’t see,’ said Frances; ‘I thought it was only an assistant sort of person.’

‘Assistant sort of person?’ repeated Edward. ‘Why, he was Mr. Goodrich, our master that I am up to.’

‘Well, that is an assistant sort of person,’ argued Frances, laughing.

‘I tell you he is a gentleman, a real jolly sort of fellow, and I believe he is going to be a clergyman.’

‘I wonder what this is that he gave us,’ said Aline. ‘It is some sort of picture that the children will like.’

She spoke in the superior sort of way in which twelve years old talks of the younger folk of the family.

They were by this time near an iron gate, close in front of a house, where lights peeped from behind the blinds; and here the three parted, the two girls to run round to the back entrance of the house of their father, Mr. Millar, the union doctor, and Edward Bryant to go further down a darkening lane, and then across two fields, one silvery

with beards of barley in the rising moonlight, and the other scattered with cows lying down, and to be heard munching as they chewed their cud. Beyond rose the dark-tiled roofs of barns around an old farmhouse, once very handsome of its kind, but now a great deal out of repair.

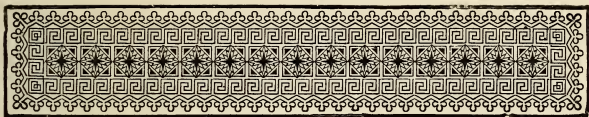
Old Mr. Bryant had in his youth been a prosperous man, holding his own land after many generations, and almost ranking with the gentry; but misfortune had fallen on him, and he could hardly keep his land in cultivation, far less make improvements, for which he had the less heart since all his children had been short-lived. Dr. Millar said that the cause probably lay in the unaltered drainage of the farm court; but to this he turned a deaf ear, as to new-fashioned fancy, and indeed he could not have gone to the expense of rectifying it.

None of his whole family were left to him, except the row of graves, small and large, in the churchyard, and the grandson of his eldest son, Edward, who lived at the farm with his mother.

She was the daughter of a corn merchant, and had known ease and fair circumstances; but trouble

had likewise overtaken her relations, and except that 50*l.* a year had been secured to her by an uncle, she had no dependence save on the old grandfather, for whom she managed, as far as he would allow her, or her own delicate health would permit, while her son Edward went daily to a good grammar school at Cokeham, a town about two miles distant.





CHAPTER II

THIRTY-FOLD

Keep thou, dear child, thine early word
Give Him thy best : Who knows but He
For His eternal board
May take some gift from thee.

‘LYRA INNOCENTIUM.’

EARLY hours were kept at Birkfarm, but Mrs. Bryant was waiting for her boy when he came to the back door at nine o'clock.

‘Well, Eddy, I hope you have been entertained.’

‘Mother, I never heard anything like it, and I saw it too ! There were poor widows being burnt, and the horrid tall car running over the poor creatures, and a faquir swinging by hooks in his sides.’

‘I read about it long ago, my dear, and saw

pictures of it ; but I thought it was all done away with now.'

'So the Rector said, and that English laws hinder the worst of it ; but they don't really know any better, and they put poor old men into the Ganges to die, with a bit of coddling in their mouths ! Men are wanted, ever so much, to teach them better ! Mother, I must go and be a missionary.'

'You had better be eating your supper than talking of what you know nothing about.'

'But, mother, there was Mr. Goodrich—our Goodrich of my form—helping him,' said Edward impressively.

'I suppose he is some cousin of his. Come, do go on with your supper. Grandpa won't go to sleep till he hears you safe upstairs.'

'But, mammy dear, you must go and hear the gentleman preach to-morrow. Now promise me.'

'Well, if grandpapa can spare me, and if Susan gets forward enough with the joint——'

'And, mother——'

'Do make haste, Eddy as his bread and cheese halted on the way to his lips, 'or grandpapa will be knocking overhead.'

Nor would she listen to a word more till she had driven her son up to his own little room, and shut the door on him, his last words being : ‘ You’ve promised, mother ! ’ He said his prayers under the vine-sheltered window as usual, and a thought of the scenes on the wall made him pause over ‘ Thy kingdom come. ’ When he rose up, he went to his money-box and shook it out. There were two threepenny bits in it—one would have to be given in church to-morrow (for it was reckoned mean and ungrateful not to give silver)—fivepence in coppers, and half-a-crown, given by a visitor of his mother. He was saving in hopes of a pair of skates, and had been sorry to hear the collection announced, because the little silver bits would have to be sacrificed, and he looked twice at the bright half-crown, and thought of ‘ The joyful sound proclaim. ’ Perhaps it would not freeze next winter ! He would see how he felt about it to-morrow, and be prepared, at any rate ; so the half-crown and the threepenny pieces both went into his Sunday jacket pocket before he lay down.

His mind was full of the same subject when he awoke, and he gave hearty help to his mother in forwarding the needful work about the house, and

he hunted her up soon after ten o'clock to put on the black silk in which she always looked so lady-like.

'Going to church, Missus?' said the farmer, who had just come in from inspecting the calves, and was unfolding his Sunday newspaper.

'Yes, grandpa ; Eddy wants me to go and hear this Mr.— Mr.——'

'Smithson,' suggested Edward. 'He has been among the Red Indians.'

'I hear he is a very fine preacher,' added Mrs. Bryant.

'Missionary sermon, eh? Ah! hunting just to get money, a regular dodge—better spent at home. And what's this——' picking up Edward's paper. 'Who's been sticking tracts about here?'

'Oh, grandpa, let me have it. They gave it to me last night, and I had not time to see it.'

'Parsees and Chinamen! Rot! Only fit to light a pipe with.'

He crushed it, and threw it into the grate, but the fire was low, and Edward watched to rescue it, while his mother was saying :

'Well, I like to hear a good preacher now and then, and I have put everything ready for Susan,

so if you don't want me particularly, grandpapa, I should be glad to go for once in a way.'

He gave a sort of grunt which, at any rate, was not a refusal. Mrs. Bryant was a good woman, and had been a regular church-goer in her youth ; but since she had lived at Birkfarm, her own frail health at first, the needs of her young child, and then of the household and the old man, had made the distance seem longer and longer, so that she was out of the habit, though she always read her Bible and one or two sermon books on a Sunday, and sent Edward regularly ; besides that, she always made him read a chapter in the Bible, and heard his Catechism in the evening.

It was a very fine day, and the walk through the fields was pleasant before the sun had become powerful. There was the sweet Sunday quiet all round, and the bells began to peal.

'How odd it must be to be in a country where there are no church bells,' said Edward.

'Your uncle—my poor brother Charlie—when he came home from Canada, he could never hear enough of our bells at Awmouth—he said he was quite lost without them in the back-woods.'

‘What did uncle Charles do? Did they have no church at all?’

‘Oh, I believe there was one twenty miles off, that a clergyman came to once a month, and that sometimes your uncle rode over to it. I think the place is more settled now; but I have not heard since poor Charlie died. What stories he did tell me about the Indians!’

‘Were they Christians, mother?’

‘I am sure I don’t know. They made beautiful bark baskets and canoes, worked with porcupines’ quills. I had one for a long time, but it was lost when I moved here. They were harmless enough, that tribe; but there are terrible savages over in the States that would think nothing of scalping you, and hanging your scalp up by the hair to their belts.’

‘And does no one try to teach them?’

‘Oh! this was all five-and-twenty or thirty years ago; everything may be changed since then. It was reading about “Leather-stocking” in Mr. Cooper’s books that made your uncle want to go out; but, there, he did not find it one bit so romantic as he expected, and the Indians were nasty dirty fellows.’

Edward decided on looking for 'Leatherstocking'—if such were his name—among his mother's old books in the parlour cupboard ; and therewith they came into the lane, where more church-goers appeared, and presently, from Dr. Millar's gate, came Frances and Aline, also a tiny boy, proudly strutting in Sunday knickerbockers, and a little girl endeavouring to carry a big red prayer-book, as well as a small fringed parasol over her shoulder, in an opposite direction from the sun.

'Mamma is at home with baby, and papa has been sent for to old Mr. Mason,' explained Frances, 'so we are taking the children to church ; and Mabel and Bertie have promised to be very good.'

'I have got my big bright penny for the poor babies that get buried, and perhaps Pharaoh's daughter will come and save them ! And see my book that Aunt Bessie gave me.'

While she was displaying the large book, down went the penny on one side, and the parasol on the other, and while Edward was hunting for the penny in the grass Master Bertie captured the sunshade, shut it up, and began to poke him in the

back with the point, and peace was only restored by Mrs. Bryant persuading the boy that he would be taken for a girl with such a feminine implement.

She offered to take him to sit with her, but this was contrary to the dignity of all concerned, and she had to withdraw her offer. Mabel had more to say about the Chinese babies, and Aline explained that they had been reading to her the story below the illustration on the paper that they had brought home, which had much struck her little mind.

Their seat was just in front of Mrs. Bryant, so that she might help in time of need ; but the children were good on the whole, Bertie much occupied with counting the O's in the *Benedicite*, and staring at old Mr. Briggs's bald head till he went to sleep ; Mabel listening with open mouth.

The text was, 'How shall they hear except there be a preacher, and how shall they preach except they be sent ? ' and an eloquent and striking picture was drawn of the contrast between the heathen and those who dwelt at home in ease and comfort with all the blessings of religion, carrying with it civilisation and peace. Mr. Smithson told how, in the

islands of the Pacific, every village spoke a different language, so that a missionary said surely they had come straight from the Tower of Babel, and how, what was worse, each village was at feud with its neighbour, so that a man could not safely walk a few miles beyond his own precinct without being in danger, and how the people themselves were weary of their perpetual strife, and called on the Christians on other isles to bring them the words of peace.

The Words of Peace—this most appropriate name by which the message of the Gospel is known, even by those who have not yet surrendered themselves to it. And in these spheres of action the crying need was for Men to receive those who were stretching forth their hands to beg for the light we have ourselves received. Therewith the preacher replied to the too frequent objections in people's minds, who asked, 'Why should we disturb the native, who is very happy as he is,' by showing what this undisturbed happiness is, when every village is at feud with its neighbour and slaughter prevails at each moment? Or when a chief cannot die without a witch doctor denouncing whom he will as the author of the illness, and all

the family—wives, children, and relations—being cruelly murdered in revenge? Or, even in India, though the burning of widows be prohibited by English rule, yet the widowed girl, even though she be betrothed in infancy, and have never seen her husband, becomes the persecuted family slave, with no hope or favour in store for her, but compelled to lead so dreary and miserable a life that the flames were really thought preferable? Or, again, the contempt of life and destruction of infant girls in China——

At that moment little Mabel burst out in an irrepressible gasping cry, half scream half sob. Frances tried to remove her, but she drew up her heels and sat fast. Edward, who was just behind, leant over, took her up in his arms and carried her out, Frances following, while she still sobbed, words breaking out between—‘Oh the poor little dear baby girls.’

They sat her down in the churchyard, and Frances shook her and scolded her, but still she did not leave off crying ‘the babies, the babies.’ Perhaps she had been half asleep, and some dream of the picture had mixed itself with the words to which she had awakened, of the girl-babes whose

fathers were about to bury them alive unless a sum were paid for them.

The congregation were beginning to come out of church, and Frances wanted to lead her out of the way, being very much ashamed of her conduct ; but she would not stir, and went on sobbing out something about King Pharaoh's daughter, the babies, and her penny, so that Edward, who had of course missed the collection himself, offered to take her back to give it.

So he did, meeting one of the churchwardens with his bag, going to the vestry. Edward told him, and he smiled pleasantly, saying, ' Good little maid ! '

But, alas ! the penny, which had been nursed within the little thread glove, was not to be found there. Where could it be ? They went back to the seat where Mabel had been, and looked up and down, and still it did not appear. Mr. Brooks said he could wait no longer, and the little girl was just breaking into another howl, when Edward said ' Here,' and thrust between her fingers what felt like a penny as she dropped it triumphantly into the bag—and then, rather in a fright at finding herself in the big empty church, her little

boots went clattering down the aisle. Frances and Aline were waiting for her, and Bertie, holding his head very high, and declaring that he didn't cry.

But Mabel had her own story to tell, though nobody but Aline listened to her. 'I lost my penny, and we hunted for it all over the pew ; but at last Eddy found it, and do you know, Alley, it had all turned into silver ! And I gave it to the bag to save the poor little babies, just as Pharaoh's daughter saved Moses in the ark of bulrushes.'

Aline thought that Mabel must have picked up one of the round tin tickets that the school-children had ; but she was a kind sister, and did not laugh at the little one's belief in the transformation. And poor Mabel had to be received at home in disgrace for having cried at church : 'Such a great girl as she was !'

Edward had run after his mother, and did not hear ; but he had not heard the end of the 'big silver penny,' for as he was strolling about the fields—in some hesitation whether he would go to evensong, doubting between sunshine with research after a weasel's hole, and weariness with the possibility of some more missionary stories in

the sermon—the Rector, accompanied by Mr. Goodrich, came to the back gate of the rectory garden and hailed him. ‘Ha! Edward Bryant; I thought it was you! You took Dr. Millar’s little girl up to give her offering, didn’t you? Well, it was half-a-crown. Was not it a mistake?’

Edward turned as red as a girl might have done, and mumbled, ‘She had lost her’s, sir.’

‘It was yours, then? You meant it?’ asked the Rector, in a kind leading voice, that seemed to draw out of Edward the exclamation—‘Oh, sir, I do want to know more about those missionary gentlemen.’

The Rector stopped, and smiled, saying: ‘Well, Mr. Goodrich is the man to tell you. He is preparing to go out to India to help in the work there as soon as——’

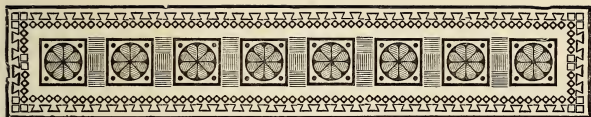
‘As soon as there is reason to think I am in some degree ready,’ said Mr. Goodrich quietly; but with a look on his face that greatly struck Edward. ‘Would you like to see some books, Bryant? If you will come to my rooms I can lend you some that I think will interest you.’

‘Thank you, sir’; and there it ended for that evening with Edward. But Mr. Goodrich said

eagerly, as they returned into the garden : ‘ A nice chap, that. Are there hopes of any purpose in him ? ’

‘ No man can say. His grandfather—great-grandfather, in fact—is an unprosperous old broken-down farmer of the stolid stamp, his mother a quiet, overdone, commonplace woman. Troubles and hard work before him, I should think, and no sympathy for aspirations.’





CHAPTER III

GREAT EXAMPLES

Each stepping where his comrade stood.—‘MARMION.’

EDWARD set out for his walk to his grammar school, at Cokeham, at eight o'clock the next morning, for it was nearly an hour's distance, and this school opened at nine. Just as he had crossed the fields and come into the public road, he was overtaken by Mr. Goodrich, also on his way, and they walked on together, the boy feeling very shy, and as if he would rather have avoided a whole mile alone with a master; but presently Mr. Goodrich said, also like a shy man:

‘You would like to borrow a book of mine about missions?’

‘Yes, sir; thank you.’

‘Is there any you would especially care to hear of?’

‘No, sir. There were so many in the lantern, and it does seem such a shame that nobody should do anything for those poor people.’

‘Not quite nobody,’ replied Mr. Goodrich. ‘There have been noble workers, and grand blessings in success have been granted to them; but many more are wanted before the promise shall be fulfilled, “The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”’

‘I suppose that is in the Bible, sir?’

‘You will find it in the second chapter of Habakkuk, and very nearly the same in the eleventh of Isaiah. Those were the very last dying words of the good Bishop Broughton, under whom the teaching of Australia was begun.’

‘But is not Australia mostly English convicts and settlers?’

‘Not convicts in these days; but there are natives, who are said to be the most difficult persons to deal with, having little intelligence, and great wildness and savagery; but I believe that though much evil has been done to them by angry,

impatient settlers, in what one can only call wickedness, yet a way to the hearts of some has been found by those who carry out our Master's words: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature!" His eye was on the golden east as he spoke, with a certain tone of eagerness in his voice that touched Edward to the heart, and made him almost ready to take off his hat, as if he were in church.

'And one ought!' he said in a low voice.

'I did not say that everyone ought,' said Mr. Goodrich, 'only those to whom the call is sent.'

'I should like to,' muttered Edward.

'Ah! you have long to wait, and to be prepared before the call can come to you; but I shall be very glad, as long as I am near you, to give you anything to read that can be a help in knowing what the work is, and who are the men who have carried it out thus far.'

At this moment, two other scholars—George and Jim Sparrow—came forth from a field path. They generally did join company with Edward Bryant; but they were rather surprised to see him with the master, who, however, shook hands with them in a friendly way, and began at once

talking about the next football match just in an ordinary tone, to which the boys replied stiffly and shyly. But Edward was all the time feeling that he should never think of Mr. Goodrich again quite as he had done before he had seen the light on his face. When they had entered the town, and the master ran up to his lodgings, George asked, 'Whatever were you about with old Goody?' He answered, rather gruffly, 'He had been sleeping out at our parson's at Langbridge, and was going our way.'

'What a bore,' responded George, and Edward said nothing to the contrary. He would not for the world have let them, or, indeed, scarcely any one else, guess at the thoughts which were rising in his heart. Indeed, it was as if to confirm them that, in the course of the morning's lesson, an atlas was opened, when, by some accident, a map was unfolded which showed in colours the various religions prevailing in the world, and Edward was startled to see how small a proportion had the red line of Christianity, how much was yellow for Mohammedanism, how much black for heathenism of different kinds. He was so struck by the thought that he did not recall his attention in

time to answer about the effect of the distribution of the oceans upon climate, and Jim Sparrow took his place.

When he had eaten the lunch (or dinner) provided by his mother, he went in to Mr. Goodrich's lodgings: he was taken into the little parlour, bare of most things excepting one print of St. Paul preaching at Athens, and another of him and St. Barnabas preventing the men of Lystra from sacrificing to them as gods. Mr. Goodrich had gone to speak to the head-master, but he had left half-a-dozen books out on the table with a message by the landlady that Bryant was to look at them and choose which he would like to borrow, and take it home if he himself did not come back in time before school.

Edward peeped into one after another, and thought that the names of Bishops Heber, Patteson, Hannington made them sound too grand and too formal, and 'Lionheart,' the title of one book about Bishop Hannington had a childish air about the early part, which he was just old enough to begin to shun. 'Henry Martyn' looked a little dry, and he was most attracted by the scenes in the life of John Paton in the Pacific islands of Tanna and

Aniwa, where the black bride is depicted who appeared at public service with all the European garments she could collect, including a pair of sailor's trousers thrown over her shoulders like a scarf. Also there was the wonder and delight of the natives when Mr. Paton dug their first well, and thus won their hearts to him as a wise man, to whose words they might listen. There, too, was a chief in his ornaments, performing a war dance, but declaring that no god had ever heard his prayer save the Jehovah God of the missionary, and, in the next picture, burning his idols.

Edward was caught by the excellently told history, and when Mr. Goodrich returned, held up the book, saying : ' This, if you please, sir.'

Mr. Goodrich was, perhaps, a little disappointed ; but he said : ' Yes, it is a noble story, full of interest ; an excellent one to begin with. You will remember that Mr. Paton was a good and faithful member of the Presbyterian Kirk of Scotland—and that when he speaks of " the Church " that is what he means. But most truly do the words apply to him, " He that is not against Me is with Me." Yes, take the book, it is most inspiring.'

The book was well packed up in brown paper as he spoke, not only to protect the cover, where a savage is pointing a gun at Mr. Paton, but to prevent the other boys from seeing it and chaffing about 'Goody's' loan ; and, as it was, Bryant had to make answer whether he had been in a row or had a 'jawing,' or what Goody could have wanted with him.

However, he brought himself and his book home in good time, and was very soon absorbed in the wonderful and simply told account of the daring and suffering of the missionary, which caught his whole fancy, so that he could hardly be called off to eat his supper or go to bed.

Only the thought that Mr. Goodrich might take away the book, if it made him neglect his tasks, led him to get up in time to finish his sum and prepare his construing before he returned to his book in the morning ; and when he committed it to his mother's charge, as if it were the most precious thing in the world, he begged her to read it, telling her she would never be able to leave it.

She laughed, and said : ' And what would become of your shirts or grandpa's dinner if I sat dawdling

that way? No, no; books are all very well for you young folks, but I have plenty besides to do.'

Somehow Edward became more and more taken up with Mr. Paton; he told the stories to the Millar girls, only Frances said she did not want to know anything about those tiresome missionaries and black people, and Aline grew wearied, counted her knitting, and merely said 'Oh,' at proper intervals; but little Mabel was never tired of listening, and always sidled up to ask whether Eddy had read any more about the funny black men.

It did not do much good to his studies, and when, after twice reading the book over, he brought it back to Mr. Goodrich, and ventured to ask for another, 'There was no reading like it,' he said.

'Yes, it stirs one's spirit,' said Mr. Goodrich, with his eye on St. Paul's uplifted hand.

'To go after them?' said Edward, with bated breath.

'Yes; but, Bryant, have you been working at your present duties as you ought?' And, as the colour came up in the lad's face: 'I have had to make many more marks in this essay than usual; and Mr. Bell tells me your arithmetic has been hurried through, without proper attention. If

these books take you from your right employments, they become temptations, and I cannot lend you more.'

'Oh, sir, I'll try.'

'Make this resolution, Bryant, or I shall not feel justified in making you the loan of this "Life of Bishop Mackenzie." Never touch it till you can honestly feel that you have properly prepared for the next day's work.'

'I won't, sir, I promise ; but——'

'But what?'

'It doesn't seem of much good to a missionary.'

'Doesn't it, my dear old chap? Well, is the missionary to go out without power of calculation or estimate—in case he finds himself prime minister to some tribe, or to deal with subscriptions? Or, as to knowledge of soils, could Paton have dug his well without it? Or if he only knows his English Bible and Prayer-book, would he be competent to translate or explain the Greek—not to say the Hebrew—words in their proper force? Depend upon it, all you learn here is so much preparation for the strange, indescribable work you may have to undertake. Besides, to get one of the scholarships would be the very way to help you to the work.'

‘I see, sir,’ said the boy with more alacrity.

‘And, the most important preparation of all—that of knowing how to give up your own will and enthusiastic fancy for the sake of an immediate dry duty.’

The school bell rang, they both started up to the ‘immediate dry duty’; but the words stayed with Edward.





CHAPTER IV

COLD WATER

All things are best fulfilled in their due time,
And there is time for all things.—MILTON.

EDWARD tried to bear in mind and act upon Mr. Goodrich's advice and his own promise ; but he did not find it always easy to do so. There was the strong temptation to slur over his work, and if he found a doubtful word in the lexicon, to make it *do*, and not seek any further ; or if his sum would not prove, to decide that the proof must be wrong, and let it go, even if his answer had not common sense. *That* would probably have been the case with anything he was eager about ; but his grandfather began to observe how much he read, and when he was catching every moment available before starting for school, or curled up in the window seat on

a Saturday, would come on him with, 'Holloa ! what are you after ? We don't want bookworms ! A young chap like you ought to be after football or somewhat.

'Football ain't come in yet,' said Edward.

(Grunt)—'There's enough for any lad to do that has got a mind to it. You've not been out rabbiting lately, and they are punishing the turnips in the Outfield like a flock of locusts.'

'You were at me last time for wanting to take your gun,' muttered Edward.

'Eh ! what's that ? Gun ? Ay—take it ; only mind what you are about with it. Don't shoot yourself or old Barnes ; and mind you bring home enough of the little thieves for Missus's pudding here.'

That old-fashioned fowling-piece was a great treasure of Mr. Bryant's, and though his great-grandson had long ago learnt to use guns, it always made him angry for the lad to touch it ; so it was plain that it was meant as a bribe to forsake the beloved book. However, as Edward tramped out, with the weapon on his shoulder, he was thinking of the joy of releasing a poor negro from a heavy yoke of timber shaped like a Y, and



*"IS THAT ALL YOUR BAG? DEMANDED HIS
GRANDFATHER."*

debating in his mind whether it were permissible for a missionary to fight in such a cause.

When he saw the poor bunnies scudding away, and showing their little white tails as they rushed for their burrows in the copse, his spirit rose to them, and he shot three, and carried them home triumphantly over his shoulder, with the greater satisfaction because Billy Blake came and envied him his gun, and wanted very much to handle it, which Eddy was too wise, or too obedient, or both, to allow him to do.

‘Is that all your bag?’ demanded his grandfather. ‘When I was your age I should have been ashamed to bring home no more than that, with only an old flintlock fowling-piece, too! But boys are not boys now.’

So he mourned and growled while he was eating the rabbit pudding which Mrs. Bryant had made so carefully with onions and beautiful suet. He ate it, indeed two helpings; but declared all the time that if Ted had been half the chap he was at his age, they would be eating the conies instead of the bunnies—the conies—preying on his ‘turmots’!

Opposition is apt to make people, especially

lads, more and more earnest in their own pursuits, and the more Edward's reading was interfered with the more set upon it he grew. He dreamt a good deal over his plans, and worked diligently since he had been told that the scholarship would be the first step. Even his mother, though at first she liked anything that kept him quiet and out of mischief, began to wish he was more like other lads, and to snub him when he tried to tell her of some strange adventure, a noble exploit, a wonderful conversion.

‘There you are at it again ; I’m quite sick of hearing of those nasty Red Indian blacks.’

‘Oh, mamma, you know better ; Red Indians ain’t black.’

‘All the same, horrid murderous savages, that would take your scalp and eat you as soon as that porker,’ said Mrs. Bryant, who, perhaps out of perversity, had mixed up her geography, though she had once known better. And it was worse when Mr. Bryant happened to fall upon a book with a map, and a coloured picture of the Red Indians in all the feathers and war paint.

‘Holloa ! You’ve got one of those missionary papers again. That’s what you are always after, is it ?’

‘I wish you would speak to him, grandpapa,’ wailed Mrs. Bryant. ‘He is always at them—neglecting his studies and all.’

‘I never do; I’ve promised not,’ muttered Edward under his breath; but he was not heard, except by his mother, who was generally ready to take his part; but just now had been made angry.

‘Well, his studies; maybe that’s his master’s look-out; though I’m sure he doesn’t give half time enough to them. But, as for the rest, I told him to run out and cut me a bit of parsley for the cold pork. “All right, ma,” he says; never stirs, and I may go and whistle for my parsley.’

‘I only wanted to finish——’

‘Ay, that’s the way,’ broke in the grandfather. ‘I tell you what, Ted, you are going just the way to be good for nothing. A scholar won’t make nothing of this here farm.’

‘No one will make much of the farm,’ muttered Edward, who was old enough to have some notion of the state of affairs; but he could not have said a more unsuitable thing, for it put his grandfather into such a passion as he had never seen before.

In a rage, the old man went back to the

rougher language of his youth. He swore that all this impertinent idleness came of his being given to that reading, and snatched at the book to throw it into the fire. Edward threw it into his much terrified mother's lap, crying out that it was not his, but Mr. Goodrich's—and this, though it saved the book, stirred up a fresh storm. 'If I find one of them books about again, I'll Goodrich it, you may tell the parson fellow. So that's what he's up to! Putting all this stuff in your head and making you turn against the station where God has called you. That was what the "catechis" said in my time ; but now you must be after all this rot and rubbish ! One word more of it, and I'll have you home from your new-fangled school, and make my fine gentleman follow the plough, as your betters have done before you.'

He struck his thick oaken staff upon the floor as he spoke with worse words of wrath than are here set down, and Mrs. Bryant, dreadfully frightened, and expecting every moment that he would bring on a fit, hustled her son out of the room as fast as she could. Edward had a notion of staying to protect her, but she hastily said : ' Oh ! no, no ; you only make it worse. Go off to bed and have done with it.'

He could not go to bed, but sat on the stairs in the dark, hearing the gruff, angry voice roar at her till it died away in coughs, and though it broke out again, once or twice, there was at last a lull, and it was plain that the old gentleman was smoking himself into a calmer state.

Edward ventured noiselessly to come down into the kitchen to get a candle and some supper, and presently his mother came out to him, looking quite pale after what she had gone through, and bringing the book.

‘Take it away, Eddy,’ she whispered, holding up her hand so as to show that the silence must be preserved; ‘and never you bring one in again. How could you? I thought he might have died of it, and then what would you have felt?’

‘But, mother, you know yourself, that——’

‘Hush, hush! He is your great-grandfather—over eighty years old; no need to vex him. ’Twill all come after——’

‘And then I shall have got the scholarship, and be educated, and be free to go out and give myself——’

His mother nearly screamed out her ‘Non-sense.’

‘I mean it, mother,’ he said, wound up as he was by the excitement of the night.

‘Then you mean just to break my heart,’ she declared, bursting into tears and suppressed sobs, partly the effect of the scene she had gone through, but partly the outbreak of the dismay that had been growing upon her ever since she had begun to watch the course of Edward’s reading.

‘You ought not to say that, mother. It is the most noble thing a man can do, to work for his Master, and to spread His Name among the poor heathens that have never known Him!’

‘Oh, oh!’ But it might be well for both that there were sounds like waking in old Mr. Bryant’s sitting-room, and outside, the steps of the maid coming home from her message. The mother composed herself, and Edward ran up to his bed, in a state of passion and of dismay, and feeling that no one save himself and Mr. Goodrich cared for the House of God or the spread of His Name.

Still he was not wholly comfortable as to meeting his mother when he came down the next morning. He never knew whether he should meet his grandfather, who sometimes, when

rheumatic, did not come down till very late, but at other times would be exceedingly early in rising, wander about the home buildings, rating the men—who never minded how ‘Old Master’ abused them—and coming in long after Edward was off to school, and lecturing on ‘the benefit of the master’s eye,’ and growling at every one’s idleness, till he fell asleep.

Edward was glad to see his boots outside the door, and to gather that it was a sleeping morning. His mother had a nice breakfast for him, and perhaps both felt a little shy as he ate in haste, and the subject was not entered on till he was taking down his overcoat, when she said, ‘Here’s the book, Eddy, and don’t you borrow any more. It only upsets the old gentleman ; and don’t let me hear more of that nonsense of yours. You could not do it yet, not for years to come, and I hope by that time you’ll be grown wiser.’

‘No such thing’ ; but, happily, he was wise enough to keep the muttering between his teeth, as he swung his strap over his shoulder and strode off, without his usual good-bye to his mother, who looked after him, a good deal pained that, as she would have said, her boy was getting beyond her,

and with no question in her mind but that she was right and he was foolish, and, might be, headstrong.

He, on his side, was debating whether they had any right to interfere with his reading, when it was of such a kind, and whether he should not go on with it in spite of them, hiding his books in the cart shed, or getting Aline to take care of them. At his age, surely he might choose what he liked ! If it were ' Jack Sheppard ' or any of the sporting books the other boys liked, they might object ; but a book like this, and lent him by his tutor—there could not possibly be any reasonable cause for hindering him. He was sure Mr. Goodrich would say the same. His wrath had made him stride on so fast that he found he should be able to avail himself of the half hour allowed for breakfast before school, and he made his way to the lodgings at once.

Mr. Goodrich rose up from his letters and his paper with ' Good-morning, Bryant ; have you come to change your book already ? '

' I have it here, sir, thank you ; but I want to know whether they have a right to stop my reading ? '

' Who are they ? '

‘My grandfather— great-grandfather he is,’ said Edward, as if that put it a little further off, ‘he has set on mother, and they made ever such a row, and say I must not have such books, and I don’t see that they have any right. It is not as if they were bad books, but when you lend them to me, sir——’

‘Hold hard, Bryant ; I don’t think I have the right, as you say, to lend you what is disapproved by your authorities at home.’

Edward’s face fell. ‘Won’t you, then, sir?’

‘Not unless I could have a talk with your mother about it, and get her consent.’

‘I don’t know that it would be any good, sir. She is awfully afraid of the old gentleman, when he gets into one of his tantrums ; and, besides, she says it would just break her heart if I was to go out as a missionary.’

‘She may think differently by the time you are old enough,’ said Mr. Goodrich.

‘Only, sir,’ said Edward, ‘she might do something that would always hinder me. There’s this old farm that is tied round my neck just like a burden—not that I don’t like the place. It has belonged to us since Queen Anne’s time, worse

luck ; but it has got muddled and mortgaged, and all sorts of things ; and they say if it comes to me I shall never make anything of it, and shall have to live the life of a labourer, all for nothing, and I don't want to be bound down to do that just to pacify the old man, who does not half know what he is thinking of——'

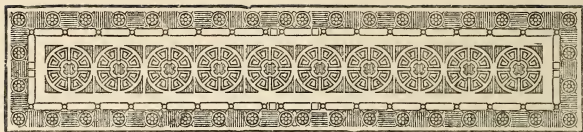
'I see,' said Mr. Goodrich, 'it is a hard situation, and a great trial to be patient and dutiful. Your work for the scholarship is in any way a preparation. Remember, your training for the present must be to submit in patience. It is the way to make a man of you, and more, a servant of God ! There's the bell, we must be off. Only, my dear lad, bethink you, when you say your prayers, to add the Easter-day Collect, and I think you will find that God will bring your desire to good effect in whatever way it will be.'

Edward was not at all delighted with his conversation, nor even to hear again that Mr. Goodrich thought he had a good chance of the scholarship. He thought he had more arguments to bring forward ; but Mr. Goodrich was going out to luncheon, and engaged later in the day. He went home walking hotly and sharply ; but as he came

near the hedge of the Millars' garden he heard Mabel's voice going on as if she were reading, and, peeping through the hedge, he beheld her standing in the midst of a half-circle of dolls—one black and curly, another fair and waxen, a third with no complexion to speak of, a fourth very like a painted monkey. 'Now, my dear black brethren and sisters, you had better renounce your idols that are only wood and stone, and leave off burying your poor babies, and tying up their toes all horrid, and getting into rivers to die and burning yourselves to death with your husbands! Don't! I am come to preach to you better things, and to bring to you the blessed Bible.'

'Mabel, Mabel, Mab—come in,' called Frances. 'You are at that silly play again that mamma says is just profane, and you have been and taken my Bellanina again that Lady Mary gave me! Out in the sun and dirt too; come in directly, you naughty child!'

'Ah! It is all play and nonsense,' muttered Edward to himself; 'no better with me than with poor Mab! That's what the world is made of—care for nothing!'



CHAPTER V

TURNUED ASIDE

I watch them drift, the youthful aspirations,
Shores, landmarks, beacons, drift alike.

C. KINGSLEY.



EDWARD BRYANT seemed to lose heart, or to throw it into another direction, after his interview with Mr. Goodrich. He felt affronted as well as disappointed, and did not try again. He hoped that the master would have talked to his mother, and though there was no great reason to expect much to be gained, yet still he felt it was due to him. He did not know what searchings of heart the young tutor had with himself, in his real affection for the lad, and desire to win so promising a recruit for the mission field, and his own sense of

duty and fair dealing towards the boy's mother and grandfather.

He did talk of the matter with the rector of the parish, Mr. Fraser, but was advised by him to let it alone. 'Poor Mrs. Bryant is a timid woman, and evidently much afraid of the old man. Even if you could see her without his interfering, I do not think you would be able to make her understand the responsibility of interfering with his aspirations. Of course, at his age, there is no knowing whether the call is real, or whether there is only interest in adventure. Indeed, it is quite doubtful whether he ought to go.'

Mr. Goodrich, who had his family's blessing and approval, could hardly enter into the rector's scruples. But he gave way when the argument that he had himself used was applied, namely, that thirteen years was too early an age to build upon, and that the really best preparation would be such dutifulness as would form a sound, manly, godly character.

But at the beginning of the Easter holidays came an urgent call from the Bishop of Saskatchewan for men who were likely to stand the climate to go out with him to the mission to the Canadian

Indians. The head-master consented to the engagement being given up, and Mr. Goodrich only returned to the school, before the term began, in much haste to bid farewell and pack up his properties, nor did Edward hear of his visit till it was over, or that he had left a kind message for him.

But already the world had seemed changed to Edward with the overthrow of his dream and purpose. He did not like to walk to church with Mabel Millar, who always expected him to tell her a missionary story, and when he told her instead a ridiculous tale about the cherry tree that grew out of a horse's back, she was vexed, and said it was not what she wanted.

He hung back so as not to overtake the girls on their way to church, and on going out, joined company with some other lads, older than himself, and of a rather lower grade, whom he was used to meet at cricket matches.

They were talking about an expedition to an old ruin four miles off, full of jackdaws' nests, and they turned to him laughing, saying it was of no use asking such a swell to go; and another declared he was half a parson, and of course he

would not meddle with 'parson birds,' he was just like them. Afraid they had discovered his missionary inclination, Edward loudly disavowed all idea of being a parson, declared (and believed it) that his affections were set on a tame jackdaw, and undertook to meet the other lads after they had gone home and had their dinner.

And so he did ; but the expedition was not very successful. The walk took longer than had been expected, and was wearisome in spite of the lads cutting sticks and sparring with each other, with a good deal of chaffing and holloaing. And when at length the half-dozen lads reached the ivy-grown old ruin, and Jack Bowser had climbed up, causing a prodigious row among the jackdaws, who flew out, croaking and chattering, he found nothing but eggs ; and suddenly a keeper came out from some unknown quarter, and roared at them to be off. My lord would not have the place meddled with, and if he caught them there again he would have them up for trespass. Sims, the biggest and most impudent, who was apprenticed in the town, tried to reply with some sauce about 'Holloa, leggings, don't you wish you may get it.' But, of course, this only made him more angry,

and threaten them with immediate 'prosecution,' so that they had to flee—till they were out of breath ; and Sims having a shilling in his pocket, proposed to turn into a public-house and have a glass of beer all round, which startled Edward Bryant, who had no notion of doing any such thing, and, besides, had no money in his Sunday coat. 'His mammy won't trust him,' was the cry, and 'Never mind, we'll treat you.'

It hurt his pride, and he would have marched on, but the more good-natured Hill drew him in ; and though not much money, yet much time, was spent in somewhat rude chaffing and fun, and the lads did not set out for home till far too late for evensong. This was nothing to them, but Edward had of late been generally regular in attendance, though, so far as his home was concerned, he could do as he pleased as to the second service.

On the whole, his mother was far from objecting when he said he had been for a walk with 'some other chaps.' In fact, perhaps she viewed it as a sign that the wild project, which she dreaded, was passing from his mind.

And so it was, though perhaps it might be

doubted whether the course of these Easter holidays left her thinking about her only son as happily as she had done before. He was, perhaps, growing too old to be satisfied with the Millar girls as companions ; and it was unreasonable to be vexed when he proved not to be with them, but about somewhere with Bowser, Sims & Co., and coming home later and later in the evening. The old man growled at her nonsense, when the lad was only getting to be something like a boy at last, and he would not have him meddled with.

The effect was, that when the holidays were over, and school work began again, Edward could not settle down to diligence. His holiday task had only been hurried over, and was far from perfection, and that slow, plodding, dull James Sparrow soon passed him ; and he saw less and less chance of carrying off the scholarship, but he did not care. His only desire was for diversion that might fill up his mind, and keep it from reverting to the happy days of Mr. Goodrich. So it was that, whenever there was a row, Bryant was sure to be concerned in it, and it came at last to the head-master writing to his mother that if

things went on in this way, he should have to consider whether to retain him.

With many tears, she spoke to Edward, and received only a rough, churlish answer, telling her that women and schoolmasters were the greatest humbugs in the world, and he had been doing nothing.

Then, when he was startled by seeing that he had made her cry, he gave her a hug, and told her not to mind what a horrid old fogey might say. Which did not comfort her much, except that she told the head-master, also Dr. Millar, that her Edward was such an affectionate boy.

The first thing that made any difference in his goings on was that his grandfather had a stroke. Edward came home, much later than he ought to have done, to find candles flaring about the house, Dr. Millar in the old man's room, his mother on the stairs watching for him, and all in confusion. They did not expect Mr. Bryant to live through the night, and when Edward was drawn into the room, heard the snoring gasps, and saw the drawn, unconscious face, he was very much shocked.

Dr. Millar laid his hand on his shoulder and said : ' Get your mother to go down with you and eat some supper. She will have a great deal to go

through to-night, and she should take some food to enable her to go through with it.'

Edward was too awe-struck to speak much, but he took hold of her hand in the coaxing way he had not used for a long time, and said, 'Come, mamma, do !'

'Yes, go ; you ought to give him his supper,' said the doctor, 'and take some yourself.'

'Poor boy ! he has had nothing to eat,' she answered, in a dreamy way ; but she let him lead her downstairs, and sat at the table, helping him and mechanically herself, while she told him how, when she was busy in the kitchen, Alice the maid had called her, saying that master was in a fit, and there he was, almost dropping out of his chair, in the same state as at present. They had called in the shuffler to get him upstairs, but they could not do it till Dr. Millar came and helped. She made sure that he was struck for death, and she let herself cry a good deal, as she had not dared to do since the first, and said he had been her only friend, and what would become of them now ?

Edward was confused and puzzled ; but he wished to comfort her, so he came over and kissed

her, and said, 'Never mind, mother, you've got me, and I'll do all I can.'

He had not kissed her since the days when he first went to school, and it was a great comfort and pleasure to her, before she was obliged to rise up and prepare for her night watch, sending him to bed, and promising to call him if there were any change. And Edward, as he knelt by his own little bed, prayed the first *real*, though very incoherent and uncertain, prayers that he had put up since Mr. Goodrich discouraged his missionary 'castles.'





CHAPTER VI

HOME CARES

Nothing useless is or low,
Each thing in its place is best ;
And what seems but idle show
Strengthens and supports the rest.

LONGFELLOW.



LD Mr. Bryant did not die that night.
'Much the same' was the report in
the morning, and so it continued.

Edward stayed at home for a day or two, to take messages and help his mother about the farm business ; but by the Sunday, it was decided that he had better go back to his schooling, as long as there was no change.

Old Barnes had really managed pretty much as he pleased for months past, paying little or no attention to growling orders from his master, and he could go on in the same way as long as the old gentleman was likely to survive.

He could speak after about a week, but so indistinctly that hardly any one could understand him ; and he could sit up, though one hand and one foot were useless. Poor Mrs. Bryant, it was a terrible time for her, for she had always to be at his call, day or night, and had all the household business on her hands, besides the poultry and the dairy, and only an untrained girl to help her.

They brought in Mrs. Barnes, Tom's wife, a rough, homely dame, as charwoman, and she could manage the patient better than any one ; for he never was inclined to submit to his daughter-in-law, and the fractiousness of illness and shattered powers made it harder than ever for her to deal with him, while Mrs. Barnes had no scruple in ordering him, and scolding him when needful.

'Come now, sir, don't you be cranky and obstreperous ; let me sit you up and open your mouth. On my word and honour, if you bain't as bad a handful as ever was my little Bill, when he had the "electric" fever, and the doctor, he says I never should rear him if he didn't obey orders. So now, be a good lad, and mind me when I tells you what's for your good.'

Hopes of 'rearing' poor old Mr. Bryant were misplaced ; but at any rate he was fairly contented under Mrs. Barnes, and Dr. Millar pronounced her to do quite as well for him as a regular nurse, which was a great comfort, as he well knew, considering the expense and inconvenience ; and the invalid's helplessness was likely to last for a long time, while poor Mrs. Bryant had to manage money matters as best she could, and as much as old Barnes thought proper to refer to her about the farm. How could wages and food be provided out of the receipts for dairy and poultry, and might she sell the calf, and go so far as to sell the rick of hay without authority, and only Barnes to bargain for her ?

Edward was in all her counsels and difficulties, and kept his word about doing his best in odd jobs about the farm-yard, and even in keeping back murmurs at having to sit in the kitchen on a cold evening to save the parlour fire, and at having to live on suppers to which he would not have liked to bring in an acquaintance. He even proposed to go without a glass of beer, and his mother thought it so good in him that she quite had tears in her eyes when she declared that he

was the best son in the world, but she never could consent to his 'skimping' himself. However, when the little cask was finished, and it came to buying a fresh one, she could not help asking, 'Would he mind very much doing without it?'

All this was making him older and more thoughtful; and he intended to get out of the football team because he was needed at the farm-yard. But when he found that he was not considered a great loss he was disappointed, and felt discontented with the task of shutting the cows home and locking up the poultry; and a refractory cockerel got hard measure when he and his pullets had to be chased out of the young turnips. Edward even threw a stone at one of the hens, and was relieved that her hysterical cackle proved that she was not hit. It was hard that she should suffer for Ben Jackson's contempt of his activity.

And though it certainly was dull, and there was a dreary sameness in 'Just as usual; only a bit more fretful,' and in being always called upon to help to square those endless accounts of his mother's, which really she could do quite as well as he could, though he had begun book-keeping at school. Only, alas! no arithmetical powers would

make the incomings sufficient for the outgoings ; and to get a cheque from the shaking hand of the grandfather required the united powers of old Barnes, his wife, Dr. Millar, and Mrs. Bryant ; and when he cried afterwards, and said they were robbing him, and ruining him, and the boy would be a beggar, Mrs. Bryant declared she would never try again.

But all this was changing Edward, and he not only took more pains at school and in helping his mother, but he thought more gravely of life. On one hand it was a dreary look-out, for he knew that this was only tiding over the time of the old man's decay, and that there would be a great break-up of the home he loved when the end came. But, on the other hand, there came a sense of resolution and strength, and of being the one on whom his mother must rely.

Frances and Aline avoided him at first, with the childish shrinking from one who is under a great misfortune ; but Mabel ran up and seized his hand, holding it till they went into church ; and all soon grew used to the state of things.

‘ Not quite alive, but as bad as dead,’ said Frances ; ‘ I wonder where his mind is ? ’

‘Father says no one can guess what passes in a person’s soul when he seems quite gone from us,’ said Aline, very gravely.

It gave Edward much to think about, all the more because notice of a Confirmation was given out to be held at Cokeham Church for the town and the neighbouring parishes. The rector, Mr. Fraser, gave it out in their own Langbridge Church, and there was no doubt that Frances and Aline should go to be prepared by him. Nor indeed was there any doubt that Edward should. Indeed, he was glad that it should be at his own home, though the masters at Cokeham had classes for their boys ; but some of the lads were Dissenters, and others had no inclination to make the promise, which they seemed to think was the chief point ; and their mothers said : ‘ Well, they were very young, and they need not be forced.’ Only one or two laughed about it, but even the more thoughtless silenced them.

Yet hardly anyone thought about the Seven-fold Gifts of the Holy Spirit which would be given. Even Mrs. Bryant, though she wished her son to be confirmed, as part of his duty as a churchman, only thought of it as taking his vows upon him, and

was rather surprised when she had time to listen, or to look at what Edward brought home from the rectory and from church. They all went to classes there, with the other children of the place.

‘And,’ said Frances, ‘it is quite disgusting to hear how forward that pert Rose Gray is, putting herself out to answer everything.’

‘Well, she answered lots of things we could not,’ said Aline.

‘So she ought, always going to the Sunday-school,’ said Frances.

‘Yes ; it made me wish I had been taught so much—she knew so much better than I do,’ said Aline.

‘That’s just what I thought when I saw how that young monitor—what’s his name?—took it all in,’ said Edward. ‘He was up to it all.’

‘So he ought to be,’ again repeated Frances, ‘being a monitor.’

‘I do wish I understood as much as some of those girls do!’ said Aline.

‘Oh, nonsense—it is easy to get up enough to pass,’ answered her sister.

‘It is not passing. It is for our lives,’ said Aline.

She fell behind with Edward, who, as his mother had read the Bible with him on Sunday evenings, really knew more of Scripture thoughts than either of the girls whose small private school did not attend much to their religious knowledge, and whose mother was too busy to do more than send them to church, and take care that they said prayers—the same prayers as Mabel and Bertie said. It had not occurred to her to give them anything more appropriate to their growth; but the rector offered them more advanced devotions. Aline was pleased and thankful; but though Frances thanked him, at home she said it took up more time, when she was hurried in the morning and sleepy at night. This was in the private talks that the rector had with each of his candidates. He had one, of course, with Edward Bryant, but nothing was then said about the lad's former aspirations towards missionary work. Not only did it appear evident that his first business in life would be to attend to his mother, but he felt an absolute sense of shame whenever he remembered that old dream, and, with a kind of twinge, put it from him as a past and foolish thing.

These young people were all three confirmed.

What they thought and felt, they did not tell one another, except, perhaps, that Edward observed 'he was glad he was not a girl, to think about the set of a veil,' and Aline felt rebuked ; yet not so much so as when little Mabel told her that now she was sure she was going to be very good.

Edward had to go to the Altar alone the next Sunday, for his mother could not have left the old great-grandfather, and thought it irreverent to make it common 'by Communion more than three or four times a year.' He went—full of purpose—chiefly to do his duty towards her.

The two girls went with their parents, Dr. Millar having found time. Moreover, Aline was resolved that the little ones should not be so ignorant as she had found herself. Their mother had read a little book on Scripture history, and taught 'First Steps' to Frances and Johnnie, till there was a bad illness through the family, and then another baby had been born ; the elder children had been sent to Miss Vardon's little school, and home instruction had been dropped.

The two elder girls were to go to a boarding-school by-and-by, and Mabel was already at Miss Vardon's ; but Aline, in the meantime, determined

to teach her and Bertie something of what they ought to know.

'First Steps to the Catechism' was nowhere to be found about the house. Mabel had a pretty little nursery book about Joseph and Moses, and there was a great Family Bible, full of pictures, in which all their names were written, but the children were not allowed to turn this over for fear of damaging it, and it was not possible to her to make a Sunday talk or lesson attractive without more means. She tried to borrow 'First Steps' from Rose Gray, but it was a torn and dirty little tract, and the children despised it. Indeed Bertie, after the first day, could not be captured at all, and Frances said he was not to be plagued. His mother, when appealed to, said Aline had right notions, but was taking too much upon her ; and Bertie would learn it all fast enough when he went to school.

Mabel was a more thoughtful, religious-minded child, as well as two years older, and she really liked her time of reading with Aline, and wanted to know the meaning of words and phrases in the Catechism, more than her sister could clearly explain. One day, when Aline happened to meet the rector alone, and he spoke very kindly to her,

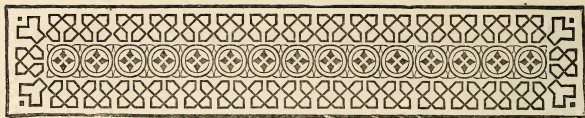
she blushed up, and with much shyness asked him to lend her a book, like those the school children had, with which to teach her little sister.

He was pleased with her, took her to his study and gave her two nice fresh books, and presently told her that, in the absence of one of the teachers, there was a little class at the Sunday-school, and he should be very glad if she would like to take it, if her mother approved.

Mrs. Millar had no objection if Aline liked such work, and there were no infectious disorders in the parish, nor did she mind Mabel's going with her to sit by and hear. It would be one child off her hands and out of mischief.

Teaching because one knew nothing might seem an odd arrangement, but the rector knew what he was doing. The class were very small children, and only needed to be taught what Aline knew or found in her books. She and Mabel delighted in the class, and enjoyed their Sundays. Mabel learnt all the hymns, and, moreover, thought about them ; and Aline made many steps in what she wanted to understand.





CHAPTER VII

MABEL'S NATIVE

Is there who scorns the little things ?
As wisely might he scorn to eat
The food which yearly autumn brings
In little grains of wheat.—LUCY FLETCHER.

THE Millars had a picnic. Aline's and Mabel's birthdays, with five years between, came on two consecutive days in early August, and it was always the custom of the family to have some treat on one of them, especially as the time came in the holidays.

The favourite plan was to take their dinner, and spend the afternoon at the ruin where Edward Bryant and the other lads had last year had the adventure with the keeper and the jackdaws. Leave for picnics there could be obtained by asking permission of the steward, and this was duly done.

It was a very joyous party that set out, the lesser ones packed into a donkey cart and two pony traps, which also carried the provisions, and the elder ones walking, except the drivers, namely, Edward, and John Millar. The young ones thought it all the more fun that no one of the party was more than seventeen; but Mrs. Millar was hardly so well satisfied, to judge by the cautions she gave Johnnie and Frances, and her disappointment at finding that Mr. and Mrs. Sparrow, who had talked of being of the party, were both prevented, and only sent Lucy, George, and Jim.

Talking, calling, shouting, laughter, playing tricks abounded, hot as the walk was; but everybody got in safety to the ruin. There was not very much of it—there were the remains of a moat with a pond at one end, and the stump of a tower and an ivy-clad wall. The learned had something to say about the history and the civil wars; but there was nobody who cared for that. All that signified was to rest in the shade, unpack the eatables—and especially the provisions and the gooseberries—and spread the table-cloth. The boys had laughed at the notion, but Lucy and

Frances were determined to do the thing genteelly and to have plates and knives and forks, though the brothers declared that fingers were made before forks, and that pie tasted much better from them alone !

Forks or fingers, the meal was much enjoyed, and was as merry as anything that could be imagined, with screams of laughter over jokes too silly to be written down, frights over imagined snakes, and more real frights when the wasps found out the good things. If the elders had been there, perhaps the noise would not have been quite so loud, and some of the tricks might not have been played ; but there was no great harm in them, and Edward Bryant, all care and trouble thrown aside, was the loudest of the loud, almost the roughest of the rough, though perhaps he could not be so absolutely rude as Jack Bowser.

Mary Black, who was a demure girl, by way of being lady-like did not care for it, and, after a cold frog from the moat had been dropped into her lap, while impish laughter broke out above her head, she rose up and strolled away in a dignified manner ; but, before long, a wild scream startled

them all, a real shriek of fright, not like the affected screams of laughter.

Up they all jumped, and hurrying along met her, flying and breathless : 'There's—there's a dreadful—black man,' was all they could make out, and she pointed behind her, and flew into Lucy Sparrow's arms, panting. The girls huddled together, the boys went on, some thinking it was a trick, or some folly on her part ; but they really saw something very dark, in white garments, slowly, as if just awake, rising up from under a big beech tree, where they had left some of their baskets in preparation for their tea.

'Hollo, you nigger fellow, what are you doing there—bagging our cake?' shouted Jack Bowser.

There was some answer, as of one bewildered, and unintelligible, with a hand raised to the turbaned head.

The lads, Edward Bryant and all, were in high and thoughtless spirits, and when Bowser shouted 'Nigger ! nigger ! stealing cake, scaring our young ladies,' all joined in the cry, half for the fun of it ; whereupon the stranger made more gestures of remonstrance and entreaty and turned to flee. There was a redoubling of the shouting—'Thief !

thief! Nigger! nigger!' One picked up a stone, and was about to launch it. Suddenly, little Mabel, in her white frock, her hat off, her hair flying, started out to the front of them, 'You sha'n't! you sha'n't; bad boys! I tell you, he's one of the dear heathen natives—I won't have him hurt.'

'Little puss, get away, you'll be hurt,' called Edward, trying to snatch her back; for the Sparrows and Bowser were beginning a rush that might have run over her. But she started away and shook her frock at him, 'No, no; stop them—dear heathen.'

Edward caught her up in his arms, though she kicked violently; but 'the poor native' was out of sight, and the keeper, in his formidable presence, was advancing on them, with 'How now, boys! what's all this? you to be pelting my lady's Indian page! Be off with you, at once, I say.'

John Millar and Lucy Sparrow came forward with: 'We didn't know. He frightened Miss Black.' And as the keeper muttered 'More fool she,' Lucy added: 'They—we—thought it was a tramp come to steal our tea.'

'You did, did you? Well, you'd better be off with you before my lady hears of it. She doesn't

half like letting all the idle lot into her park, and if she heard you'd been at Joe, or whatever she calls him, no one would never be let in no more; so you had best pack up your things and be off.'

'Must we go?' asked Frances. 'It was all Miss Black's fright that set on the boys. Our father is Dr. Millar at Langbridge. We—my little sister there—did all she could to stop them.'

'No objection to you, miss,' said the keeper (whose wife had been attended by Dr. Millar); 'but that there big lad, ay, and the rest of the chaps, they had best be off. They've been after no good here before.'

'Oh, but please,' entreated Frances, and one or two more of the girls, 'let them stay for tea. We can't well go without them to drive us. And I am sure they will behave well.'

'Well—if you makes yourself responsible, and I keeps an eye upon them,' consented the keeper, 'you may drink your tea if you likes, miss, and I'll explain to my lady.'

On the whole, perhaps, Jack and George would have preferred being turned out, and taking their revenge in 'larks,' to drinking tea so early, with Frances Millar responsible for their behaviour and

the keeper hovering so near that they could not even have the diversion of keeping the young ladies on tenter-hooks as to what they might be going to do. Mabel wanted to give him a piece of cake, and Aline hoped to make it acceptable by saying it was for his little girl. She ventured, moreover, to ask if the man was really a negro.

‘Certainly not—if only Africans were negroes proper. My lord had been a Governor in India, and there had been a great famine, and many children left orphans. My lady had taken one of them to bring up, and liked to keep him in his Eastern dress, all white, with a red and gold sash. Oh, yes ; he could speak English as well as any of them, if they would have listened ; and he came to church every Sunday.’

‘Then he is not a heathen?’

‘Heathen? No, indeed! My lady had him baptized, you may be sure, and he goes to church with the servants regular, every Sunday ; yes, and minds his book there better than any of you lads, I’ll bet.’

‘Well, I thought he did not look like a real blackamoor nigger,’ said Jim Sparrow, for even in the glimpse that had been afforded of the youth

he was seen to be of a much slenderer form, with a browner skin, and none of the well-known negro features.

'Niggers are all the same,' growled Jack Bowser.

'And here's this little Mab awfully sold that she hadn't got a real live heathen to preach to,' said her brother John.

'Now, Johnnie,' remonstrated Aline, 'don't.'

But John did not heed, and went on: 'Just as she does to her dolls in the garden.'

'Here, put her up on this heap of stones for a pulpit, and let us hear what she was going to say to him,' said Jack Bowser. 'Speak up, little one. Begin, "Dear native! Am I not a man and a brother?"'

Mabel hid her face in Aline's lap, and cried. John and Jack came to lift her out by force, but she kicked; and Frances, with the other girls, declared that she should not be teased. There were loud voices and scuffling, and the keeper came down on them, declaring that he would have none of this, and they must all go off directly—he should have thought they would have known better than to act in that sort of way; and he

would not listen while Frances and Lucy tried to explain that it was all that horrid boy, Jack Bowser ; but quelled all dispute by pointing up to a path where some of the gardening-men were seen going home from work, so that it was plain he would have support in expelling this riotous set.

So, a good deal crest-fallen, and some of them sulky, the young people were obliged to collect and pack up their properties, the keeper insisting that not a scrap of paper nor a gooseberry skin should be left to make the place untidy, and off he sent them all.

Edward Bryant had become rather ashamed of himself for having been carried along by the rude boyishness of the others, and he would not allow the brave little Mabel to be further tormented, as he could see some of them intended, so he invited her to share his old ramshackle cart with Aline. It was not at all popular, for it bore traces of farm work, and the poor old pony was both slow and sullen, and not to be trusted not to back into a ditch ; while the Millars' horse was only to be dealt with by John, and not absolutely safe even with him.



THE KEEPER SUDDENLY APPEARS.

Mabel was very happy, sitting upon a basket and chattering away, not about the heathen, but on all sorts of childish fancies, not wanting much answer, till, finally, just before they reached the village of Langbridge, he was roused by her exclaiming: 'But you *do* mean to be a missionary, don't you?'

'Oh, my dear, I have much more to think about than that!'





CHAPTER VIII

THE BREAK-UP

Man's a king, his throne is duty,
Since his work on earth began.—J. STIRLING.

THE break-up at Birkfarm came at last. The old man grew more and more feeble, and in the winter he had another stroke from which he never rallied.

Of course there ensued a time of confusion and difficulty such as every one knew was inevitable, and on which there is no need to dwell. A lawyer, Mr. Twistleden, came to attend to matters. He had been a friend of Edward's father, and had been appointed trustee for the boy. It is enough to say that there were claims which made it impossible to retain the farm, even till Edward should be of age to decide about it; and, when everything was

wound up, Mrs. Bryant only possessed the 50*l.* per annum that had been settled upon her by her uncle, and a few investments of her husband's, which brought in about 30*l.* a year more, while Edward, as heir-at-law, obtained, when the mortgages were settled, the stock sold, and the debts paid, nearly 2,000*l.*

This would not be at his own disposal till he was of age, and, in the meantime, the interest would go to assist the little income that they would have to depend upon. To Mrs. Bryant the change would be a relief. She had not been brought up to a farm or to country habits, and it would all have been against the grain to her even under happier circumstances ; and the grandfather had not, even in his better days, made the home of her widowhood cheerful or pleasant to her, or helped her inexperience. She had been his housekeeper, so to speak, by compulsion and necessity, and knew that she had never been a good one, though she had done her best, and he had never been substantially unkind ; but her lot had not been a happy one, and though she would be poor and pinched she felt a sense of freedom, as if—she said to her son—she was beginning life again.

It was more sad to Edward. There certainly had been a kind of relief in having the world open to a sense of enterprise, and in not being bound down to an unprosperous piece of land ; but then he could not fail to be attached to it, or to dislike to think of his favourite old haunts belonging to strangers. Nor was he insensible to the honour and glory of being the heir to a 'landed property' come down to him from his forefathers. He had enjoyed a certain respect in consequence, dilapidated as his inheritance was, and after his out-of-door life, with horses, such as they were, to drive ; a fowling-piece, now his own, and rabbits to shoot, it was distasteful to sink down into life in a town upon a high stool, as his mother planned for him. Nor could he see any better opening, and he had promised to do his best for her, so he set his determination manfully to work, and spared his mother most of the objections and grumbles which he poured out to poor Aline. The two Millar girls were going to a boarding-school, so he would lose his chief companions, even if he stayed at home, and that was one consolation.

He was sixteen now, and failed to win the scholarship. His fit of idleness had thrown him

back, and the quantity of needful occupation that had come upon him had prevented him from working up. Perhaps his mother was only sorry for his failure and disappointment—she did not like her boy to be beaten ; but his success would have meant privation and perplexity to her ; and if it prevented him from becoming a clergyman and a gentleman, it certainly disposed of all chance of that horror of hers, his recurring to the missionary scheme.

Her original home had been at Awmouth, a small seaport, where her father had traded in corn, and though her nearest relations had passed away, there were still some connections with whom there was an occasional exchange of letters, whenever there was an event in either family.

On her inquiry whether any employment could be found for her son, she was answered that, if he were a fair French scholar, there was a vacancy in a merchant's office for which he might apply, with a chance of success, and his mother's friend knew a lady whose health obliged her to give up a small boarding-house which she would transfer to Mrs. Bryant, with the arrangement that a certain amount

should be paid over to her regularly for the rent and furniture.

Fortunately for Edward, there was a good French master at Cokeham Grammar School, able to hold his own with the boys, and thus Edward was equal to writing a respectable French letter in which to make his application. He had a turn for languages, and had even helped Aline by the knowledge of Latin that had once given hopes of the scholarship. At any rate, the letter gained him the appointment, with the understanding that he was to improve himself in French and German, and, if he did so, and gave satisfaction, might look forward to an advance.

It was not a very promising prospect at the best ; but it was a great relief to Mrs. Bryant to have something definite to look forward to, and Edward was glad it was a sea-side place, for he had listened to her stories of the sailing and boating adventures of her brothers. She was chary of them now, because, as she told Mrs. Millar, that was what she dreaded in the matter, for her brothers had all had a fit of wanting to be sailors. One of them had been drowned, one of them was a merchant captain in the American service, and

one had settled in Canada, had made a visit home, and had since died.

‘My Eddy is an adventurous spirit,’ she said, ‘and is sure to be after the same, now he has dropped all that missionary talk.’

‘Oh, never trouble yourself about that,’ said Mrs. Millar, ‘it is the way of all boys to talk and plan ; but they settle down safe enough as they get older and see more of life. He would be just the same anywhere else ; and seeing the life close may work it off.’

‘My Eddy has a high spirit,’ sighed Mrs. Bryant ; but more as if she were proud than regretful of it.

Whether it were his high spirit or not, Edward made up his mind beforehand that the boarders would be hateful, despicable people, who would leave him no comfort at his meals or in his evenings. One of them, Mr. Cobbold, turned out to be the senior clerk in his own firm, and the other, Miss Grant, who lived on the higher floor, a daily governess, not very young nor very pretty ; but, if Mrs. Bryant was satisfied with both, her impertinent young son decided within himself that they were an old fogey and an old

frump ; though, happily, he had no one to whom to say so.

The furniture—well, it was handsomer, in Mrs. Bryant's view, than the old oak which had been bought up at such good prices from Birkfarm ; but, to Edward, it seemed half shabby, half grimy, and he could not feel at home till he had hung up his great-grandfather's gun over the kitchen fire, where his mother did not like it at all, till Mr. Cobbold declared it was a curiosity, and very valuable.

Mr. Cobbold was a formal man, whom Edward viewed as nearly as old as his grandfather ; but Mrs. Bryant said he was highly respectable, silent and very critical at meals, and never speaking but about food and the money market. Probably he was as sorry that Mrs. Bryant should import a young man, as the young man could be that his mother should succeed to such a solemn old lodger, and one in authority, too, in his firm ! But the governess, Miss Grant, was a lively person, though wizen and worn looking, and she had a great deal to say.

Edward was at first inclined to be affronted when he found that she had offered to help him with his French and German in the evenings, and

he gave a gruff kind of consent ; but after the first when he had forgiven her endeavour to correct his pronunciation, and she had recognised that she must not tease him too much about sound, but stick to sense, they got on pretty well, and she found it refreshing to deal with an older mind, able to learn, after the little ones to whom she was used.

She had a great deal to say about the various churches of the town, and, except for her help with the French, Edward hardly knew which he disliked most—Mr. Cobbold's silence, or her incessant talk about the music and the chants and the sermons, and the clergy and whom they were supposed to be courting.

His mother had got quite out of the habit of church-going ; but the good lady took her in the evening, and Edward tried all round in the mornings, and chiefly haunted St. Faith's, because he liked the music and had heard a sermon there that had touched him ; but he often bicycled to village churches.

But his life, on the whole, depended mostly upon the youths his contemporaries, and happily they were not an undesirable set. They were not

given to betting—in fact, their club had regulations against it, even at the regatta ; and that first summer, rowing, being perfectly new to Edward, was a passion and a fever with him. His mother, of course, was afraid he would be run down by a steamer, or some other boat ; but Mr. Cobbold actually growled out an assurance that the boys were steady fellows—decent chaps enough, as lads went—and if she hindered him, he might do worse. So he soon qualified himself to be a member of the ‘Triton Club,’ and spent most of his spare time and thoughts upon it in the summer, forming, too, a warm friendship with a lad named Andrews, who suited him better than any of his Cokeham school-fellows, and, moreover, introduced him to a Shakespeare Club in the autumn, which became so delightful to him that he had little reason to regret Birkfarm.

Indeed, as Mrs. Bryant had not had time or opportunity to make friends there, she had no correspondent, and Edward had not so cared for any of his schoolmates that either side should write to the other. Only, at Christmas, he chose three cards for the Millar girls, and received some in return the first year, but no more afterwards ;

and everything at Langbridge seemed, as it were, to have drifted out of his life.

Indeed, he only knew from chance mention in a business letter that there had been a severe epidemic at Langbridge, and that the two youngest of the Millar children had died of it ; and, later, there was a report that the doctor himself was dead, but this was not at once confirmed ; and, after sighing over it, and wondering what would become of Mrs. Millar and the girls, it passed from both Edward and his mother in the interests of the present.





CHAPTER IX

OLD FRIENDS

We sat and talked until the night,
Discussion filled the little room ;
Our faces faded from the sight,
Our voices only broke the gloom.
We spoke of many a vanished scene :
Of what we once had thought and said ;
Of what had been and might have been,
And who was changed, and who was dead.

LONGFELLOW.

‘**W**ELL, to be sure!’ It was on the parade at Awmouth, and two young men, in boating costumes, were walking up from the pier with ‘Triton’ round their blue caps, and three girls in mourning, one tall and dressed as a full-grown young lady, one with shorter petticoats, and hair still down her back, and the other quite a child still, were meeting them.

‘Eddy ! Eddy !’ began to exclaim the little one.

‘Don’t, Mab, hush ;’ and the elder one seized her arm, but not before one young man had started forward with :

‘It is you, Aline—Mabel—Frances—all of you,’ shaking hands vehemently. ‘My old friends, the Miss Millars—Mr. Andrews.’

Mr. Andrews politely raised his cap and turned away, while Edward eagerly asked, ‘And your mother? and the doctor?—No’—(and the black dresses now struck him)—‘we have heard nothing for three years.’

‘Then,’ said Frances, ‘you did not know that poor papa was dreadfully hurt by a fall from the dog-cart when a bicycle frightened old Turk? He lived only a week after.’

‘When was it?’ asked Edward, in a choked voice.

‘Last September—it was the 24th that he died,’ said Frances. ‘He had been able to talk it over with old Dr. Richards, and—and—his son—Lawrence—takes the house and the practice——’ She faltered and blushed a little, and Aline put in : ‘Yes ; and he is coming for Frances as soon as we are settled in here, and the year is over.’

‘And are you come to live here?’ asked

Edward, who had put in exclamations which were as good as answers to what he had been told ; and indeed his whole demeanour showed how much shocked he was to hear of the death of the kind doctor, who had been his mother's best helper in her troubles. He said something of her being very sorry, and asked whether the Millars were living in the town or only on a visit.

‘Yes,’ said Aline. ‘Lawrence Richards’s sister was one of the teachers at the High School, and she advised us to come here, for me to be prepared for a governess, and Mabel to go to school—and Bertie to the Modern School.’

‘And where are you living? My mother will be so delighted.’

‘No. 11, Undercliff Road,’ was the direction given him by little Mabel, and they walked on together till they were near the place where the band played, and Frances rather hurriedly said : ‘Now we must wish you good-bye. Come, Mab.’

For Mabel had hold of his hand, as in old times ; but there was something in Frances’s air that made Edward recollect that they were not all village playfellows now, and that High School

acquaintances might not expect to see their young ladies accompanied by a 'Triton'; so he made a rather stiff bow, and turned away, letting go the clasp of Mabel's hand, and not looking round though he heard her sisters calling after her.

He carried home his news to his mother, who, on her side, was much shocked and grieved to hear of good Dr. Millar's death, but a little doubtful about going to call upon Mrs. Millar. 'You see, my dear,' she said, 'what with our family property that was, and all the rest of it, we were pretty well on a level with the Union doctor; but now, if she gives herself airs as a physician's widow, I can hardly tell how it may be; and I would not have you in the way of being trodden on, on no account.'

Edward had not much fear of being trodden on, and he was very anxious to see more of his old friends; so he gave his mother no peace till she had decided to call, but timing it so as not to be taken for a regular visitor unless Mrs. Millar seemed to wish it. That would have been presuming. Nor would she go at an hour when her son was free, nor indeed would she tell him when she was going, so that it was quite a surprise to

him when he came home to meet her coming in, wearing her best bonnet with the roses in it.

At Birkfarm she had always worn only black, but, of late, her flowers had been allowed green leaves, and the roses had begun to blush into colour. Indeed, so had her cheeks, for though she had still much to do in the house, it was not nearly such a hard life as she had lived under the great-grandfather.

She was in excellent spirits now. Mrs. Millar—poor dear—had been so pleased to see an old friend's face, and had shed many tears over the remembrance of the old times at Langbridge, which had been to her the bright days of her life, though to Mrs. Bryant the recollection was very different. Her girls had told her of their meeting with Eddy—Mr. Bryant she must call him now—and she should have been quite hurt if Mrs. Bryant had not called. She must stay to tea, and to see the girls, and meantime there had been a long confidential chat over the troubles, past, present, and future.

All the sad history of the doctor's accident and death was gone through, with tears on each side, and then all the difficulties, which were mitigated by

Lawrence Richards's proposal to Frances, and his appointment as Union doctor. John Millar hated the profession, and had insisted upon emigrating to New Zealand with Jack Bowser; and Alice Richards had achieved the removal to Awmouth for cheap education for the younger ones. But it was quite evident that poor Mrs. Millar did not find herself so well off as to hold herself above the Bryants. She had only enough left to her to make both ends meet till her children could maintain themselves, and she did not seem to have many friends. Alice Richards had just obtained a situation as a governess at a distance, and had only been able to make her known to a few persons, who did not seem disposed to cultivate her, though her girls had made friends at the High School, and she readily accepted Mrs. Bryant's invitation to tea and supper one day in the next week.

'Did you see the girls?' asked Edward.

'Frances came in after the first half-hour, and a fine-looking young woman she is grown. She has done well for herself; but she will wait to be married till autumn, partly for the mourning, and because there is work to be done at the house, which, as her mother says, was good enough for

her. Well, Frances came in telling about a working party that she has been asked to join at the Vicarage for some missionary work in Lent. Mrs. Millar thought they had quite enough to do without ; but, by-and-by, in rushes Mabel, quite mad upon it, and Aline after her nearly as bad. One of their teachers at the High School had been talking to them about it.'

'Ah ! Mabel's little head used to run upon missions,' said Edward, smiling, 'when she preached to her dolls.'

'Well, their district—St. Faith's is it?—seems to be gone crazy about missions, by what Mrs. Millar said.'

'Yes,' said Edward, 'I saw a notice about a course of sermons on missions for Wednesday evenings.'

He did not say more, for he knew of old that it was a sore subject with his mother, and in these two years in which he had been growing into manhood, he had ceased to discuss with her everything that crossed his mind. She used to have no confidential friend, but now he found that a good deal was talked over with Miss Grant, and that sometimes Mr. Cobbold had

been asked to give him advice, in a way which he resented.

If he wanted a consultation he had rather talk to Jim Andrews, who saw the world from the same level of youth as he did, than from the old gentleman who—as he told Andrews—thought every one younger than himself must be fools.

He did wish his mother would not go on about his affairs with that old fellow ; and what was the use of having him and Miss Grant to 'spoil their evening with the Millars? who, he was sure, had much rather be without them. What? It was well to show they had professional friends of their own. Say she couldn't well help it? Why, Miss Grant would clack them all dead, and old Cobbold would sit up, and say 'Grumph,' just like the statue of Dr. Johnson in the Library.

'Don't be disrespectful, my dear,' said Mrs. Bryant, turning aside ; and when she said 'my dear,' Edward always was alarmed, lest there was something in the wind. Perhaps he would not have remarked it of his own accord ; but, on the evening of the entertainment, he saw that the eyes of Aline and Frances were directed to her fragment of a cap, a bit of lace that supported a cluster of

little feathery adornments with pink tips, contrasting the same with Mrs. Millar's weeds.

Mrs. Bryant's tea did justice to her freer expenditure and greater opportunities, and Mr. Cobbold certainly resembled Dr. Johnson in the number of cups of tea that he swallowed, while Miss Grant kept up the conversation with an endless quantity of information about the inhabitants of Awmouth, and the ins and outs of the popular concerts, lectures, and the performers thereat.

The young people, being all young, and having the grace of shyness (or modesty) about them, sat nearly silent, except Frances, who, as an engaged lady, took part in the conversation, and covered the silence of her mother, who was too much depressed, as well as too much of a stranger, to take interest in the details.

But Miss Grant was a good-natured, helpful soul, and when it was proposed that the elders should sit down to a game of cards, she proposed that Mr. Bryant should show the young ladies the canary bird and the plants in her sitting-room. The fire would not be out, and they would be able to be very cosy there.

It truly was doing as she would be done by!

The girls skipped up the stairs in great glee, Edward steering them from below, and the little room looked bright with firelight, and had the one wicker easy-chair, and two or three others, and foot-stools ranged comfortably in front.

‘Jolly old girl,’ said Edward, stirring the fire into a blaze ; ‘she must have meant it for us.’

‘Jolly indeed—three cheers for her!’ cried Aline. ‘And now, Ted, tell us all about yourself. What’s your “Triton Club”?’

‘Ay, and what’s Francie been about to go and get herself engaged—engaged all seriously? Didn’t she know she would break my heart? There, you hear it go crack!’

The nonsense was varied by a struggle who should *not* be installed in the wicker-chair. Aline and Mabel would have perched on the two arms, but Frances objected that they would certainly break it down, and it ended in their sitting on the floor, and peeping through the arms of the vacant throne, while Edward’s head made a pillow of it as he lay at his length on the rug.

There was a great deal of talk—sometimes serious, sometimes chattery—over the past and the future. Were they going to this working party?

‘Oh, yes,’ said Mabel, ‘there’s nothing I shall like so much as making things for the dear natives.’

‘Natives of what?’ asked Frances, laughing; ‘you had better know first. Yes, I suppose Aline will go with you as you are so bent upon it; but I have far too much needlework in hand.’

‘For the native of Langbridge?’ said Edward, making her blush, as of course it meant her trousseau. ‘I suppose I am not required at the working party. But do you go to these lectures, Aline?’

‘They say they are to be most interesting,’ she answered.

‘I think I shall go,’ said Edward. ‘Do you know, at the Free Library I found some of those books that Mr. Goodrich was to have lent me when my grandfather choked me off.’

‘The book with the story of the queen that poked a stick into the volcano?’ exclaimed Mabel. ‘Oh, I do want to read that again!’

‘Kapiolani,’ said Edward, ‘in the Sandwich Isles—oh, I will find the name of the book in the catalogue for you. These things make one think!’

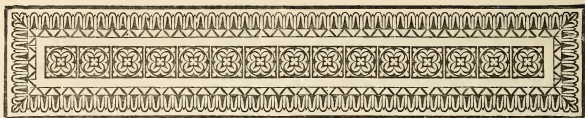
‘As you used to do long ago?’ said Aline.

‘Well—yes. There seems to be so much to be done, and so few to do it; and yet it is the work most worth doing in all the world,’ said Edward, thinking aloud.

‘I’m sure I can’t see that,’ said Frances. ‘I should have thought that minding one’s duty and taking care of one’s family was what we had to do, instead of flying about to strange countries and natives as Mab calls them. I hope you are not going to take up that craze again, Eddy.’

Edward looked into the fire, and made no particular answer.





CHAPTER X

DEDICATION

Guard thou thy words, the thoughts control
That o'er thee swell and throng,
They will condense within thy soul
And turn to purpose strong.

THE lectures on foreign missions did prove very interesting. They were on a regular system, and began with a sketch of how the duty of 'preaching the Gospel to every creature' was keenly felt in the early days of the Church, and how, in the slacker Middle Ages, it never was entirely extinct, and, at last, after the discovery of America, and in the general stir and quickening of religious life, it revived again—but only in our own country with anything like energy. He told how Captain Cook's voyages began unintentionally the rousing work, by showing a few choice spirits the great untrodden

fields—William Carey, about 1789, a poor and struggling man, first stirred the waters. An elderly minister who heard him speak declared his own feeling to have been: 'If the Lord would make windows in Heaven, might this be?'

And when, somewhat later, the subject of missionary societies was brought forward in Scotland, an eminent lawyer declared that it was to be apprehended that their funds might be used against the British Constitution; but how these faint germs were watered by grace, and gradually multiplied and increased, the first convert in India being baptized in 1800! Great examples, such as Henry Martyn, Schwartz, Judson, Marshman, Williams, and Selwyn were touched on in this first lecture, and the plan was explained; dwelling in some detail on the principal central missions in turn, one in each lecture, so that the hearers might have a better understanding of what had been done, what was being done, and what remained to be done.

The speaker had the gift of marshalling his facts so that they had the charm of a romance, and each meeting was better attended than the preceding, even by those who only cared to pass away

a Lenten evening in a not inappropriate manner ; but, to Edward Bryant and the two younger Millars, these lectures were the great event of the week. The readings at the working party kept up the interest with the girls, so that Mabel thought of little else, and Edward's enthusiasm, which had been dormant for a time, was thoroughly awakened. For a time the sea had drawn him, as it were, and gratified his yearnings for novelty and adventure ; but the ruder side of a sailor's life, as he saw it, repelled him at his age, and the more moderate boating society amusements of the ' Tritons ' failed to satisfy him after he had acquired some dexterity. There was no great probability of rise or promotion to occupy his mind in the office, and all he read, in his favourite literature, voyages and travels, tended, whether such were the view of the writers or not, to impress on him the need of devotion to the cause, and the longing to give himself to it as a true servant and follower of his Master.

The duty to his mother, as her only son, at first seemed to silence the conviction, though it could not silence the longings, partly of enterprise and weary impatience of his present life and out-

look, partly of the higher spirit of devotion. And indeed there began to be symptoms which made it doubtful whether he were as necessary to his mother as before, symptoms which an amused look of Frances Millar made perceptible to him. There were those roses in her bonnet, there was the cocoa for breakfast because Mr. Cobbold liked it, and, what was worse, she had objected to his coming whistling into the house because it disturbed Mr. Cobbold's evening nap ; and a latch-key was refused him, no doubt, on Mr. Cobbold's instigation, and she did not like him to bring Andrews in with him even to smoke in the kitchen, because Mr. Cobbold disapproved of a lot of rowdy young men about the place. It hurt Edward, for Andrews was very far from being a rowdy young man, and Mrs. Bryant had seemed to like him. When this was put forward, she answered :

‘Oh, I don't know any harm of Mr. Andrews ; only I can't have a lot of young fellows always *straking* in and out. It's not due to the boarders.’

‘I don't see why the boarders should be masters of the house,’ said Edward. ‘Mother, you used to be nicer to me at home at Lang-bridge.’

‘ I’m sure, Eddy——’ She turned her face away and began to cry. ‘ I’m willing to do anything for you with all my heart, and so is Mr. —— ’

Edward would not wait to hear Mr. who, but tramped out of the house and lighted his pipe in the street, while his mother murmured to herself: ‘ There, the boy is in one of his tantrums, when he ought to give way to the boarders—and such a boarder as Mr. Cobbold. Well,—if—if it is, I’m sure it is all for his good. My only boy!’ And she cried again, while Edward wandered out towards the sea, with his hands in his great-coat pockets, and bethought himself, first, that home and mother were changed to him; and then, as the low swish and murmur of the waves first soothed, then seemed to call, him, that there were worlds beyond, where he might be doing work that would satisfy his conscience, and have a real home and blessing on it, such as he could not see in adding up endless figures—unless he was doing so to support his mother as his duty. And suppose his mother did not need him? ‘ Yes, oh Christ! I *will* be Thine, and do Thy work.’

Perhaps it was the sound of the little bell of the mission chapel of the harbour that had made

him touch his hat in reverence to the muttered prayer, 'Show me which is my duty : I will be Thy servant and do Thy work' ; and made him turn his steps into the rough edifice, half school-room half chapel, where a few 'longshore men,' several women and many children were present for a few short prayers, a little instruction, and an address. It did not bear directly on the subjects of Edward's confused and troubled mind, but it sent him away with a certain soothed sense that a way might be shown to him of devoting himself to the service of God, if it were God's will to relax the ties of earthly duty so as to free him for it.

Two days later the next lecture described the solitary work of Dr. Judson, and his sufferings in Burmah ; then Mr. Marx and his school of princes, with their martyrdom under King Theebaw ; and the later development among the Karens and the intelligent Burmans. Also of Singapore, of Rajah Brooke, and brave Bishop Macdougall and his wife—the hopes, the disappointments, the testimony, the success, the blessings, the needs.

'Oh, Eddy, is it not glorious?' said Aline, as they moved out ; and 'How beautiful upon the mountains' little Mabel was whispering.

‘It does not seem as if anything else was worth living for,’ said Aline.

‘I mean to try,’ said Edward, between his teeth.

‘Oh! and can’t women go too?’ cried Mabel. ‘There was Mrs. Macdougall, and all the Mrs. Judsons! Oh! women can be missionaries.’

‘Her little soul has always been full of it,’ said Aline, ‘and indeed——!’

Aline broke off, shyly remembering the way in which these great ladies had become missionaries; but, like Mabel, Edward’s soul was too full of the thought for any less important, and as soon as he had seen the two girls to their door he hurried off, while his impressions were at their strongest, to see whether the lecturer had left the room, and to ask him how it was possible to be prepared and accepted for such mission work.

The lecturer, Canon Brodie, was taking down and rolling up his maps and portraits, with two of the clergy and a pupil-teacher helping him. Edward felt the disadvantage of having had no intercourse with any of the clergy of Awmouth. He had gone to church, but had a great distaste to walking with his mother, Miss Grant, and Mr.

Cobbold to the apportioned seats in the parish church, and had preferred to try all the churches round, and on fine Sundays to go out on his bicycle to one of those in the country, or to be attracted by the best music, or the more interesting preachers. The vicar of the parish had called on Mrs. Bryant, but though she was always civil, she had not seen that it was needful to give him much encouragement, and he had never even heard of her son.

If it had not been for the freshness of his resolution, Edward's first shyness would have carried him off at once ; but he was there, and had been seen, and one of the clergymen came and asked if he had lost his hat or umbrella.

'No, sir, thank you ; but I wished to speak to Mr. Brodie.' So the die was cast !

The curate steered him up to Canon Brodie, who turned, expecting an inquiry after some relation in Burmah or Singapore, for he did not often hear what was now uttered, in a tone of desperate resolution :

'Sir, I should be much obliged if you would tell me of any way in which I could be put in training for mission work abroad.'

All the eyes looked him over, and saw a respectable-looking youth with a good open face, highly coloured from the effort he had made, and with steadfast mouth and grey eyes, that had looked straight up for a moment, and then were cast down. The Canon glanced at the curates to see whether this were an acquaintance, then said: 'I should like to talk to you. Will you give me your address?'

He gave his home and his business address, from which it could be understood what was his position as an office clerk.

'You live with your mother? I could call and see her to-morrow morning. Is she aware of your wish?' as Edward seemed to hesitate.

'She knows it has long been my wish; but I have not broached it to her yet.'

'And may I ask whether you are of age?'

'I shall be twenty in July. There is a certain sum of money to come to me when I am twenty-one, perhaps I should mention, that is, if my mother can get on without it.'

'No. 12, Freshet Road,' said one of the curates. 'That is St Mark's parish. Do you know the

rector? Can you give a reference to him?' They were now all walking away together.

'I have been about to different churches,' said Edward, with some diffidence; 'but my mother knows him, and Miss Grant, who boards with us And Mrs. Millar, of 11, Undercliff Road, knows all about us,' he added.

'Mrs. Millar,' said the curate. 'My sister knows that family—nice girls. At the mission's working party, eh?'

'Yes, sir. They come from our old home, Langbridge.'

'Have you had this design long?' the Canon asked, rather suddenly.

'Ever since I was a boy at the Grammar School,' said Edward. 'There was a magic lantern that made me think, and Mr. Goodrich lent me books.'

'Goodrich of Saskatchewan?' exclaimed the Canon.

'Yes, sir,' cried Edward, lighting up. 'Do you know him?'

'I saw him not six weeks ago. He has a tidy little church and congregation, and is getting on with the Indians.'

From that moment all was friendly and easy on that side. There seemed to be no more doubt about young Bryant's earnestness ; but as he wished to prepare his mother, and perhaps the Canon also wished to understand his position better, it was determined that the visit to her, and the consultation about ways and means and localities, should be left till this had been done.





CHAPTER XI

THE CHOICE

By other sounds the world is won
Than that which wails from Macedon ;
The roar of gain is round it roll'd
Or men unto themselves are sold,
And cannot list the alien cry,
'O hear and help us, lest we die !'

HYMNS ANCIENT AND MODERN.

TO prepare his mother ! Edward was watching for a moment when boarders and servant should both be out of the way, when a surprise was sprung upon him in his turn.

Mr. Cobbold was already in the sitting-room when he came down to dinner, and received him with : ' So, young man, I have a good offer for you—a bit of promotion. You have stuck pretty steadily to work these three years, thanks to having me and the lady there to look after you ;

and improved yourself in the foreign lingos, and I have spoken in your favour to Mr. Dobson, so that he proposes to you a berth in the office at Singapore, to write to these German and Dutch fellows, getting all expenses allowed and a clear salary of 100*l.* a year. Pretty offer for a lad of your age, I should say, and it will be your own fault, with your property, if you don't get into a partnership by-and-by, when you are of age.'

'I am very much obliged ; thank you, sir,' said Edward, but with a sound of hesitation that made his mother begin hastily :

'I am sure it is most kind and generous of Mr. Cobbold.'

Perhaps the oddness of calling that a generous act, which cost Mr. Cobbold nothing, helped Edward to speak up. 'It is very kind in Mr. Cobbold ; but I had thought of another arrangement.'

'Another ?' exclaimed Mr. Cobbold. 'You've not been mean and ungrateful enough to take proposals from Arkitt and Redding without a word of notice ?'

'Certainly not, Mr. Cobbold,' said Edward ; 'I never heard nor dreamt of such a thing. I should do nothing without notice to our firm ; but, as my

mother knows, I have long thought of preparing for foreign mission work, and I have spoken to Canon Brodie. He is coming to talk to my mother about it on Wednesday.'

'And if she takes my advice she will send him about his business. I've no patience with those parsons, going about canting, and getting idle young men to get into their own beggarly business, making humbugs of the poor natives, and then coming home and begging round the country!'

Edward had heard something like this before; and his mother moaned out: 'I'm sure you know that your poor dear grandfather was always against any such nonsense. And didn't you promise that—that you would always take care of me, like a good son?'

'But, mother, if you want me to go to Singapore you can't want me here?'

For Singapore had cut the ground from under Mrs. Bryant's feet; but she exclaimed: 'I only—it was only for your own good.'

'And this is for my good—my real good,' emphatically declared Edward. 'Mother' (as Miss Grant was heard coming downstairs), 'don't let us

say any more about it now. Let us talk it all over by-and-by.'

There was something about the young man that did impose silence on the party till dinner was over, though Miss Grant tried to keep up some sort of conversation ; but the answers were so short that her attempts fell, and Mrs. Bryant scarcely ate anything, and was very near crying. When it was over, and Mr. Cobbold was to be left to smoke his pipe, he held out his hand as she passed him, and said : ' Don't let him make a fool of you.'

As Miss Grant ascended the stairs, having tact enough to ask no questions, Mrs. Bryant subsided into a chair and began to cry, while Edward stood before her, embarrassed and distressed. ' Well, mamma,' at last he said, ' what is it? You seemed willing enough to part with me just now.'

' Ah, that was for your good. You would be in the way of making your fortune.'

' Is there no good but making a fortune? ' exclaimed Edward.

And not knowing exactly how to answer this, she went on : ' And that you should beso ungrateful, and undutiful too.' But as she stopped for a sob, Edward broke out :



EDWARD BRYANT AND HIS MOTHER.

‘I don’t owe any duty to old Cobbold.’

‘Hush ! hush ! But don’t you know. Oh ! I meant to have told you. He is going to be—your—your——’

‘I see,’ said Edward ; ‘but he is not yet, and, if he were, I am not bound to obey him. Never mind, mother, I shall be just as much out of his way and yours as if I went to Singapore, or wherever it is.’

‘Oh, Eddy, Eddy, don’t say such things. It is not that I wish or I want—I can’t bear the thought of parting with you—my own boy—except for your own advantage ; but, you see’ (now she was rehearsing what she had been conning over for several days, and never found courage to utter) : ‘I have been a widow seventeen years, and no one knows what I went through with your poor grandfather, all for your sake.’

‘Yes, yes ; indeed you have always been the best of mothers to me—Yes, indeed,’ he repeated, in another interval caused by her weeping.

‘And now,’ she resumed, ‘when there is a good opening, and such a kind good gentleman, so worthy, and willing to act so handsomely by you and by me, you can’t believe but that I would consult your good, my boy, my only dear boy.’

She held out her hands to him affectionately, and he bent over her and kissed her, saying, in a warm and kindly tone : ‘ Yes, mother, I would not stand in the way of your happiness.’ Yet, even then, the wonder occurred to him how could any one expect to be made happy by Mr. Cobbold ? But, then, he had been a housemate for three years, and might be known to have nothing objectionable about him.

She had a little more to say about Mr. Cobbold’s being so much respected, and having a share in the house of business, and a comfortable income, and how they meant, when Miss Grant went away, as she was likely soon to do, to take no more boarders, but move into a smaller house and live at ease. It was evident that the grown-up son made no part in these schemes, though it ended with : ‘ You know there will always be a bed and welcome for you, my own dear boy. And, oh ! your mother’s heart will be so glad to see you.’ Then, as he returned warmly the caress that followed, she went on, recollecting herself : ‘ And now, can’t you just please me, and give up this enthusiastic fad as you did before, and take this post—ever so much to your advantage, you know ?’

These words brought others to Edward—‘What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?’

‘I cannot give it up, mother,’ he said, ‘I spoke solemnly to God, and told Him I would.’

‘Did any one hear you, my son?’ she asked, as if half frightened at the mention.

‘Nobody. But that makes no difference; it is between God and my own soul. Mother, I do believe that our Saviour began calling me long ago, when I saw the magic lantern at Langbridge, to do what I can to help His kingdom to spread over the world; and I mean to do it, God helping me. Nothing held me back but my duty to you; and as it is plain that you require me no longer—it is getting plain before me. Good-night; I am going to take a turn on the Parade.’

It was better to be away without last words; and he took a walk up and down the Parade in the long spring twilight, trying to realise all that had passed. His own venture was uttered, and, on the other hand, the announcement that had been looming in the distance had been made, and the only parent he had known and whom he loved was practically casting him off. But his way was

opened, though at the cost of what sacrifice was yet to be known. It was all in such doubt that he could not think, and he felt the need of sympathy.

Andrews, to whom he could talk, but who had to be argued over each time, was sure to be at the Reading Room, and though it was not his custom, Edward felt drawn irresistibly to 11, Undercliff Road. He pocketed his pipe, strode on, and rang at the door. After a little delay and bustle it was Mabel who opened it. 'Oh, Eddy, Eddy, come in! What fun, mamma and Frances are drinking tea at Mrs. Malling's, and Susan is having her evening out. Aline and I have it all to ourselves.'

She brought him in, to where the table was covered with exercise books and dictionaries, and Aline sprang up, evidently from elbows on the table, hands in her hair, and general hard work.

'Is anything the matter, Eddy?' she cried, for there was something in his face that looked like a crisis.

'No. But I've done it,' he said, passing his hand over his face as he took off his hat.

'Done it! spoken out? To the Canon? Oh! you are a brick! I am so glad.' And Mabel began to dance round him.

‘Don’t, Mab,’ said her sister, ‘you are too big to make such a row ; and, look at Edward ; you see it is a very solemn thing.’

Mabel was quieted by the words, and stood with clasped hands, looking at Edward’s countenance, as he said, ‘Yes, I have given myself, and asked to be helped to see my way.’

‘Then you will really, really be a missionary, and teach the heathen, and spread the kingdom ?’ gasped Mabel.

‘I hope so,’ was Edward’s reply, seeing full agreement in Aline’s eyes. ‘But,’ he went on, ‘here is my mother going to give herself to old Cobbold.’

‘Mamma and Frances have been full of that ever so long,’ said Aline. ‘Have you only just found it out ?’

‘I have suspected it for a long time, but *could* not speak of it till she told me,’ said Edward. ‘But this evening she did. And they want to send me out to Singapore on business affairs.’

‘Then there can’t be any difficulty about her parting with you ?’ said Aline.

‘No ; but Cobbold is dead against it, just like my poor old grandfather ; calls me all sorts of fools,

and may hinder her from consenting. I don't feel bound to obey him, but I could not bear not to have her consent and blessing. Besides, he might keep her from letting me have my own money before I come of age in two years' time.'

'I think,' said Aline, 'it would not be a bad plan for you to write to Mr. Fraser. He could persuade her if any one can.'

'Yes; he is a friend of Mr. Goodrich. Oh! Aline, this Canon Brodie knows Mr. Goodrich, and his church in Saskatchewan.'

'Oh, among the Red Indians,' exclaimed Aline, 'in all the snow. Shall you go out there, Eddy, and wear snow-shoes, and christen the papooses?'

'That is what I should like; but I shall not know till I have been at St. Augustine's.'

'St. Augustine's—is it a place out there?'

'Out there? Mab thinks out there is some place where any number of natives are to be found.'

'Now, Aline, you know I am not such a goose.'

'But you do know about St. Augustine, Mab, said Edward, 'in your history of England.'

'The man that the good Pope Gregory sent to

England when he saw the Angle boys looking like angels.'

'The same. Well——' he began.

'In Kent. Yes, I know, and that is why we have Archbishops of Canterbury.'

'Well, there began from his time a great monastery at Canterbury which was called after him.'

'Oh, yes,' said Aline. 'Remember, Mabel, they used to elect the Archbishops, and there were rows with them.'

'I recollect; I suppose history does help. Well——'

'It was broken up at the Reformation, sold, and all ran to ruin. I believe there was a brewery there till about fifty or sixty years ago. A good rich man, Mr. Alexander Beresford Hope, bought the remains for a college to prepare missionaries, and it has gone on and flourished ever since. Canon Brodie was telling me about it; and if a man wants to go out properly prepared, and taught, not only divinity scholarship, but the sort of things that a missionary ought to know, he will be sent out in connection with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.'

‘And how long will it take?’ asked Mabel.

‘About three years, I believe; and though it has been made as cheap as possible, still one must have some means.’

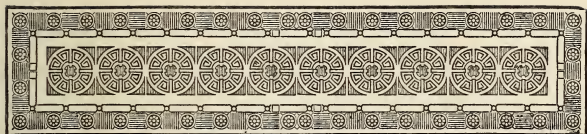
‘Oh!’ sighed Mabel. ‘I thought you would go at once, like people in books; only I suppose you must be ordained first. Yes, I should like you in Canada. Or I should best like you to go to China to save the poor babies that they bury alive. Or to the dear Coral Isles, where they make houses up in trees. Or to Africa, where they are all black, and have been slaves, with yokes like a Y round their necks. Or——’

‘Oh, Mabel, Mabel, there’s a great deal to come first, and no one knows what it will be at last.’

‘Only somehow it will be,’ said Aline. ‘It will be the old hymn, “Salvation, oh, salvation, the joyful sound proclaim.”’

The three young voices joined in the hymn; and then, a clock striking warned Edward that if he did not hurry home he might be late, and he was in no frame for argument that night.





CHAPTER XII

CHURCH OR WORLD

To draw His soldiers backward from the Cross
Woe and eternal loss.—LYRA INNOCENTIIUM.



ANON BRODIE kept his word, and called on Mrs. Bryant ; but she was in dread of what Mr. Cobbold might say to her, and only went on in an uncertain way about its being very hard, when she had done everything for her son—her only son—that he should want to go against all her wishes, on schemes of his own, to which she would never give her consent—taking away just the little income she had to depend on. This was stretching a point a good deal, for Mr. Cobbold's income much exceeded that which was derived from Edward's small inheritance, and this Edward well knew.

And he felt the reproach unjust ; but he would have perforce put off his scheme till he was of age, and could get possession of his own property.

The Canon indeed told him that he might hope to be adopted as the pupil whose expenses were paid at St. Augustine's College by the diocese ; but there was the feeling, right or wrong, of not being treated as an object of charity ; and, besides, what was more to the purpose, it was a disadvantage that his churchmanship, though real, had been of such a wandering sort that he had never come into contact with any of the clergy ; and the utmost any of them could say about him was that the vicar of the parish believed that Mrs. Bryant, of Freshet Road, had a son ; and at St. Faith's the clergy supposed he was the young man who was generally a monthly communicant.

Aline's suggestion, however, turned out to have been very good. Edward wrote to Mr. Fraser at Langbridge, and the next day the rector made his appearance at Dobson's office, and asked for an interview with the head of the firm. There he was told, in answer to his inquiries, that there was no fault to find with young Bryant ; he was a good, steady, punctual clerk, who had improved himself

a good deal, and there was an idea of promoting him, and of sending him out to Singapore ; but of late Cobbold, the head clerk, had feared that he had some enthusiastic religious mania, and Cobbold ought to know, for it was reported that he was engaged to the young man's mother.

Then Mr. Fraser asked if Bryant could be spared for an interview, and they were a joyful sight to one another, for Edward had grown into a fine young man, insensibly having lost much of his loutish, boyish look, and his countenance had refined with thought, his reading, English and foreign, and his Shakespeare Club, while the 'Triton' practice in sea boating had kept him strong and healthy.

'So, Edward,' said Mr. Fraser, as they walked towards the Parade together, 'you have still kept your old wish ?'

'Yes, sir. I put it aside while I thought my mother needed me, but I do not think she does at present, and, in fact, in this new connection she had rather have me out of the way.'

Edward spoke in the set way of one who had thought a good deal over the matter.

'And,' said Mr. Fraser, a good deal impressed,

‘this has been your consistent desire ever since Archdeacon Smithson’s sermon.’

‘Not consistent, sir—off and on; but Mr. Goodrich lent me books, and it has grown more upon me since I have been here.’

‘Without external pressure?’

‘I think not, till just lately; Canon Brodie’s lectures have shown me more of the system and of the actual needs.’

‘I see; I think it may be said to be really a call. Have you any definite plan or wishes?’

‘I should like, if possible, to be where Mr. Goodrich is; but otherwise I do not know. And I suppose, by what Canon Brodie says, that some training would be required?’

‘Certainly. You ought to have a course at St. Augustine’s at Canterbury. I should gather that you have the means for this. Terms 45*l.* a year, exclusive of other expenses.’

‘Yes, sir; if my mother will let me have the amount. But, even after I am of age, it is partly in her power, and I think in that of Mr. Twistleden.’

‘You will not be eligible for St. Augustine’s till you are twenty.’

‘That I shall be in the summer—July 3. And I should wish to begin at once, to lose no time, and——’ there he stopped, not expressing that his position at home might not be comfortable.

‘Twistleden?—I think he came to Langbridge at the time of your grandfather’s funeral?’

‘Yes. He was my father’s friend, a gentleman in the law, and was made trustee with my mother. I remember thinking him kind, and quite the gentleman at the time; and I had thought of writing to him, but I did not like to, till I knew what was to be done with my mother.’

‘I recollect having the same impression; and I should think there would be no difficulty with him personally, but one can never tell. The whole mission cause has been so much neglected in England, except by persons external to the Church, till within comparatively late years, that there is a good deal of prejudice in quarters one does not expect, as in the case of your mother.’

‘I do not think it is so much her own self,’ said Edward, ‘except the parting with me; but what Mr. Cobbold tells her.’

‘Well, I will see what can be done with her, and I must not keep you any longer.’

No warning of Mr. Fraser's coming had been given to Mrs. Bryant, and when his card had been sent up, and her best cap donned, she received him with : ' Well, Mr. Fraser, this is a pleasure, I did not know you were in the place ; I hope I may hear you preach, it would be so like the old days.'

Mr. Fraser was rather amused, for he did not think the old days had been very happy ones to her, or that she had very much experience of his preaching, though hardly by her own fault ; so he only complimented her, and very truly, on looking very well, as indeed she had a plump and prosperous air, very different from her worn and down-trodden appearance under old Bryant's tyranny ; and ' Might he congratulate her ?' he said.

She smiled and coloured a little. ' Well, Mr. Fraser, it is not a hasty measure. He has been an inmate here going on for four years, and an excellent, superior gentleman, who has never given any trouble ; and I was sure it was for my boy's good, or nothing should have made me consent. Shall you be here after five o'clock, Mr. Fraser ? I should like you to see my son, and to introduce you to Mr. Cobbold.'

' Thank you ; I shall have to be going home.'

‘Ah ; I do wish you could see Edward. You spoke to him strong about his duty before, sir, and it would be well if you could persuade him it is his duty to drop all these ideas of his—enthusiastic, fanatical, as Mr. Cobbold says, about throwing everything up and going out to heathen lands as a missionary.’

‘But, Mrs. Bryant, I don’t know that it is his duty.’

‘Nay, now, sir, you backed me up that it was his duty to give up the farm and provide for me ; and now, why should he leave me, and go off from all his best prospects just when he is old enough to profit by them ?’

‘Perhaps, Mrs. Bryant, you and I do not mean quite the same thing by profit.’

‘Well, sir, you are a clergyman ; and—and——’ (breaking off and beginning again), ‘I suppose you would say it was right there should be missionaries to the heathen, though there are those that think they would do as well, or better, if they were let alone ; but, then, why must they take my son, my only one, all I have got, for them ?’

‘I confess I thought your son’s first duty was to you, and did not encourage his aspirations ; but

you cannot say that circumstances are the same now, nor that you were intending to keep him at home.'

She murmured again something about 'For his good.'

'For his earthly profit, you mean. You are willing to let him run the risks of climate and temptation, while you stand in the way and make yourself an obstacle to what, to his mind and to mine, is a call from God to work for his Heavenly Master—for his own eternal welfare, and that of others. I should feel it a frightful responsibility to endeavour to obstruct such a call.'

She began to cry, and to say something about talking to Mr. Cobbold.

'It is not a matter in which Mr. Cobbold is concerned. He has no claim upon the young man, nor on what comes to him from his father.'

'Except that I am trustee with Mr. Twistleden, and have to give consent if he wants it. I have always received the interest till now, and his salary has gone for his pocket-money and expenses.'

'You were giving it up, anyway, now. All that is asked of you is to relinquish this last two years' income—you will have no choice when he comes

of age—to enable him to prepare for the noble course that is before him. And, Mrs. Bryant, I think I may tell you, from my own experience, that it is a very perilous thing to balk such aspirations. I have known those who have resigned them never able to settle to anything again, and with spoilt lives.’

Something struck Mrs. Bryant with the remembrance that she had never been uneasy about Edward, except when he had been threatened and disappointed out of his schemes as a boy; but she still had not given in, and moaned something about being sure that he would always be a good lad, if things were not put into his head, people fancying he would be a gentleman, and so forth.

‘ You know and I know that the impression, the call, as I may say, came long ago, quite unconnected with any such idea, from a sermon of Archdeacon Smithson’s. What I call on you to promise—as one who has known you and your son for many years—is, that you will not allow yourself to be persuaded to withhold your consent, nor the property to which he has a full right, from being used in the work to which he feels himself called.’

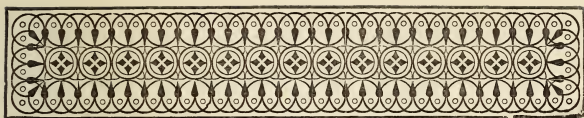
‘ Well, Mr. Fraser, since you make such a point of it——’

‘ I have your promise, then ?’

‘ Yes, sir.’

He shook hands with her, and told her he was going to call on his old friend, Mrs. Millar ; and he did not choose to hear a murmur about the Millar girls putting fancies in her son’s head about being a clergyman and a gentleman. She was sure that Aline was at the bottom of it. So she was sighing to herself, even when the door was shut on Mr. Fraser ; but her thoughts were better than her words. ‘ If her Eddy really had a call, it was not for her to hinder it.’





CHAPTER XIII

THOSE AT HOME

Smooth thou his path ere it is trod,
Burnish the arms that he must wield,
And pray with all thy strength that God
May crown him victor in the field.

IF Mrs. Bryant had seen Aline and Mabel after Mr. Fraser's visit to their mother, she would have been confirmed in her idea that her son had been inspired by them ; and yet it was chiefly their sympathy which had helped him to make his longing a resolution. As soon as they had come in from the High School, and heard what had been the purport of the call, they went up into the little room that they shared, and Mabel said : ' Let us thank God for it ! '

' But how ? ' said Aline.

' Can't we kneel down and say it in our hearts ?
Or the collect they read before a working party ? '

‘That’s the Good Friday one.’

They found it, and went on to Easter Sunday.

‘It is only that college yet,’ sighed Mabel ; ‘I wish it was to be directly. I wonder where he will go? I do want it to be China, to save the dear babies.’

‘He is a long way from that as yet,’ said Aline ; ‘but it is a happy thing to know that we can be working in the same cause.’

‘And when we say “Thy kingdom come,”’ added Mabel.

Mrs. Millar was a person of a good deal of weight, to whom Mrs. Bryant had always been used to look up ; and her influence had a good effect in producing a certain acquiescence in the scheme. Mr. Cobbold was contemptuous ; but when Mr. Twistleden, the guardian, came down and showed himself ready to consent, Mr. Cobbold found the world too much against him to continue to offer much opposition to the plans of his future stepson. Mr. Twistleden declared that it was a better prospect for Edward to be educated and take rank with the clergy than to continue to be a corn merchant’s clerk. It was a worldly view ;

but it pacified the friends, even while Mr. Cobbold sneered at 'beggarly parsons.'

'But let me give you a piece of advice,' said the lawyer. 'Don't go to St. Augustine's entangled in any engagement with any young woman. I have been told it so often happens. The young man gets trained and becomes superior, while the girl stays at home, and has no opportunities. They become unsuited ; but the engagement is adhered to, and she becomes a burthen, more especially if he is among colonists of a higher class.'

'There is nothing,' said Edward, and he spoke truly ; but, as if Mr. Twistleden had put it into his mind, a strange sense came across him that it was just possible that there might have been something with Aline Millar, who, at any rate, was not his inferior, nor was she failing to improve herself. And how pretty she had grown, and how she went along with, or even beyond him, in feeling for the spread of the Gospel !

However, he knew that all was too uncertain as to his destination for him to attempt to draw her into any attachment, and that they had better both attend to their studies. Only he wished

nothing had been said about it ; and he began to suspect it was in Mrs. Millar's head, from the pains she took that Frances or Mabel should always be with Aline. Frances was like a sheet of cold water towards any mission talk ; but as to Mabel, it was all she cared for, the romance of her girlhood, and she was so certain to have some wonderful story of admirable negroes, of terrible tortures, or dangerous adventures, out of an old collection of missionary magazines, which she had disinterred, that it was almost a joke with her schoolfellows what would be her next history of remarkable achievement.

Any excitement in Edward Bryant's presence would soon be removed, for, as soon as sufficient notice had been given to Dobson & Co., and his successor had been found, Mr. Fraser had invited him to spend the weeks that would intervene, before his admission to St. Augustine's College, at Langbridge Rectory, so as to be a little prepared for the new atmosphere, which would be unlike anything to which he had been accustomed.

This was to take place as soon as Frances Millar's wedding was over, at Whitsuntide. Mrs.

Bryant and Edward were the oldest friends within reach, but could not be spared.

After all, however, it was a very quiet wedding, with only the two sisters as bridesmaids ; and it would hardly have been evident to the neighbours at large but for the white ribbon on the whip of the driver of the fly in which the bride went to church, and the pretty hats of Aline and Mabel.

Aline looked very well under the shade of hers, and when the healths had been drunk, and the cake cut, and the bride and bridegroom started off to the station, she looked at Edward with tears springing to her eyes, which actually fell when Mabel burst out with : ‘ Oh, dear ! Oh, dear ! How dull and lonely we shall be now ; everybody going away, and you won’t be here to have squabbles with Francie.’

‘ For your amusement, Pussy,’ said Edward, trying to make light of the break-up, which he also felt.

‘ No,’ said Mabel ; ‘ but when you have an argument you do say such beautiful things sometimes, that it quite chokes Aline and me to think what a splendid life it is, doesn’t it, Allie ? ’

But Aline had run away, and Edward could

say nothing but, 'You ridiculous child.' He said it, however, in a tone that did not silence Mabel, who went on : ' And, do you know, Eddy, we have found out how we can go on helping in the cause. Miss Elsworthy, who had the working party, is always collecting for a sale of work to get money for foreign missions, and Allie and I are going to take her all the fancy work and things we can make, and it will be so nice to know we are working for you !'

'For the cause, Mab,' corrected Aline.

Well, the cause and Edward are all the same.'

Thank you, Mab,' he said, touched, though smiling, and feeling that a few pin-cushions would hardly be a great assistance to 'the cause.'

So he went to Langbridge, expecting to be recalled by his mother's wedding ; but even before Mr. and Mrs. Richards had settled into their new house, the tidings came, in a very brief note, that Mrs. Bryant had been married to Mr. Cobbold, very quietly, only a week after the other marriage, and by license. 'We thought it best to be as private as possible,' wrote the mother, 'and I knew it would avoid pain to you ; but my dear son may be sure of his mother's affection though he has chosen such a

different line from what she would have wished, and Mr. Cobbold desires me to say that he will always be sure of a welcome.'

In spite of these words, Edward did not feel as if he could bear to think of the sort of welcome he should meet ; and he spent some hours in wandering about in sight of the old farm, sitting on stiles, and thinking over what he and his mother had been to one another. All was very much altered. The house had shot out two great bay windows, which looked like prominent eyes in spectacles ; some of the old thatch was gone, and slates, or worse, corrugated iron, had been put up over the outhouses ; and in the fields that had been sold as a separate lot, a couple of very new red-brick villas had lifted their pointed heads. But the ground was the same, the field paths and hedges, the rooks cawed in their old voices, and the labourers had pleasant affectionate greetings for the young master as they still called him.

Yes, if all this had still been his own, and, above all, if his mother had still watched for him in that porch, he would have found it a different thing to go away ; and as higher thoughts began to come to him, he could believe that perhaps it was

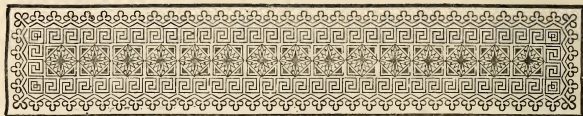
well that the home tie should be broken, and that he should be a stranger with no right anywhere.

Though in the same village, it was like being in a different world, for Mr. and Mrs. Fraser treated him in all ways as they would a gentleman pupil, and though his habits and manners were quite up to the mark, still there was a certain stiff feeling of being 'company' in the earlier days, and he felt freer when he was drinking tea with Frances Richards, and being called on to admire all the new furniture and little changes in the old house to which she had returned. She was as hearty and good-natured and glad to see him as possible ; but he could not help noticing that, even in holiday time, she did not ask her sisters to come and see her. It would have been natural, and once or twice when he heard her asked by visitors if they were coming and she made an excuse, he could not help fancying that he knew her reason. Was it not silly of her? And yet Aline *was* Aline. Could she have shown any wish?

But he had quite enough to think of to keep such matters out of his mind, for Mr. Fraser was giving him much to read and think over in the way of preparation, both in theological and secular

subjects. He had to realise how ignorant he was, and to feel daunted as having entertained the idea of being capable of teaching others ; but he was thankful for being encouraged and helped, and he certainly grew and developed much in every way before the term came when he was to go to St. Augustine's.





CHAPTER XIV

THE ST. AUGUSTINE SCHOLAR

Seize the banner, spread its fold,
Seize it with no faltering hold ;
Spread its bearings high and fair,
Let all see the cross is there.—KEBLE.

‘**H**E is coming.’



‘Who? What, Edward Bryant?’

‘Of course. You have not seen
him for three whole years.’

‘No ; I never was at home when he was, since
he went to St. Augustine’s.’

Aline Millar was working in the kindergarten
division of a great high school in London, and
was now settling herself and unpacking her things
for the holidays in the room she shared with
Mabel, who had just completed the High School
course at Awmouth. As she could not be spared
by her mother, she had been glad of an engage-

ment to help in the education of an invalid girl who could not attend the High School with her sisters. They had both grown into very pleasant-looking maidens, with sensible, intelligent faces ; Aline the prettier, and with the London air of figure and dress, though in a quiet, modest way. Mabel had, however, something more thoughtful and resolute about her brow and lip.

Aline went on asking : ‘ Has he finished with his college, and is anything settled about him ? ’

‘ He wanted to go to the Dominion, because of Mr. Goodrich, who is an Archdeacon there now—yes, and has been at home ill—and went to St. Augustine’s. Oh, Eddy was so glad, but his health failed.’

‘ Don’t ramble so, Mab ; which do you mean ? ’

‘ Both, in a way. For they say Mr. Goodrich must give up that horrible cold place, and all those nice fur-catching Indians, and live in a warmer climate. And did you know that Eddy had a bad fit of bronchitis last winter ? ’

‘ No, indeed ; you did not tell me.’

‘ I didn’t know till mamma saw Mrs. Cobbold. Well, the medical man asked all sorts of questions, and when he found that Eddy’s father, and a whole

lot of Bryants besides, had gone into declines, he would not hear of his going to a cold climate, but said he might be perfectly well and strong in a warm one.'

'And is he well now?'

'Oh, yes, it was only bronchitis. I think it will end in his going to China. The S.P.G. has a mission there near Peking, and you know that is what we always cared about most of all.'

'Yes, when you cried about the poor babies.'

'I could cry now! Do you know the Roman Catholics try to save them, and the nuns buy almost a cart load of these poor things, often dead or dying! And those horrid people fancy they do it to make charms with their eyes, and really have fallen on the nuns and murdered them.'

'They have murdered our own mission people too. I do not think China is a very safe mission.'

'One does not go to be safe,' said Mabel, with a light in her eyes.

'No,' said Aline. 'If the call comes one has to hate one's own life also, rather than not help to widen the kingdom and brighten those dark places. But what does Mrs. Cobbold say to this notion?'

‘Mrs. Cobbold fancies it is all Hong Kong, where you can be as safe as here—with the Chinamen in petticoats and long tails, such as sometimes come in the corn ships, or, once, when some tea came in.’

‘And were you fired with a passion for “the native” as at the ruins?’

‘Not exactly; though I did long to know whether the poor fellows, with their sloping eyes, had been taught any Christianity; but Mr. Andrews said he was afraid it was just the contrary.’

‘He used to be Edward’s friend.’

‘Yes; he gets letters from him, and comes and tells us about them. Do you know, Allie, I have been telling my pupil Linda Norwood all the old missionary stories Edward used to tell us, and getting her to do something for them, and it has made such a difference to her. She never seemed much to care for or be interested in anything, but now she takes in her own *Gospel Messenger*, with her own money, and tries to work for anything that is specially wanted or to collect money for it. She is so eager to get her *Messenger*, and to look out for anything

that is to be done. When the Zenana Mission ladies asked for scrap-books or dolls, or Christmas cards for the children, it was a perfect delight.'

'Indeed, it must have been a real blessing to her, as truly, Mab, I think the dwelling on the idea has been to both of us, making us feel how great the Church is, and that the lengthening of her cords and strengthening of her stakes depends on the prayer and work of the small as well as the great. I am sure it both opened our eyes and helped to train our characters.'

'You have been in the way of many missionary meetings.'

'I have gone to those at the Church House when I could ; and I will tell you one thing that your pupil reminded me of. A lady at the Women's Association said that, many years ago, a good, kind mother told her laughingly of her children showing her two silk-worms, and saying, "This one is to spin for home missions, and this one for foreign missions." Of course the profits of the silk-worms did not amount to anything ; but one of those children died as one of the foremost and most helpful in a mission in India, and his sister went

out to work in the same field. So the silk-worms did their work.'

'In the bent of the children's minds,' said Mabel.

'That is the benefit of the trifles we might despise—in the interest and bent they give.'

'I wonder if it is training for anything, and whether we shall ever go out and help?' said Mabel.

'What we have to do now is to go down to mamma,' returned Aline, smiling. 'She must be waiting for us for her tea.'

With a little shame at having talked so long and kept Aline from her, they went downstairs; but Mrs. Millar was a happy and unselfish woman, and received them by saying that she knew that they would have a great deal to say to each other, and had therefore waited to order in the little hot supper she had prepared for Aline with her tea. Still they had much to talk over, about Frances and her babies at Langbridge, and how her husband was prospering and growing quite round-backed and sunburnt with bicycling to his patients; and then the conversation drifted back to Edward Bryant, and how, when he was staying with Mr. Fraser, he

was very friendly, but he looked so much the gentleman that Frances and Lawrence Richards thought it quite a pity that he should be wasted on the strange people in the colonies and heathen parts.

‘But that was the very thing he got his training for,’ said Aline. ‘He could not go back now.’

‘So I told his mother,’ said Mrs. Millar, ‘when she was sighing over his not being a clergyman here in England.’

‘Ah, you have not told us of Mrs. Cobbold, and how she gets on.’

‘Very fairly, I should say,’ replied the mother. ‘She is grown quite stout, and is always handsomely dressed.’

‘And talks in a voice just like old Mr. Cobbold,’ said Mabel, with a little sound of imitation.

‘Not always,’ said the mother; ‘only when she is supporting his dignity and telling his opinions.’

‘Poor thing! Do you think she is happy?’ asked Aline.

‘On the whole. I am sure he is less hard to please than the old gentleman at Langbridge; but

when she sits with me and lets herself talk with pride and delight of her son, I sometimes doubt whether she would not have been happier if she had continued to depend only on her Eddy.'

'Oh! but then he could not have left her to go out,' cried Mabel.

'She might have been led to go with him, said Aline, 'like the wives, sisters—yes, and mothers—I have been hearing of.'

'Yes,' said Mrs. Millar, 'and I confess I do believe that though my old friend has, in one point of view, done well for herself, I have sometimes thought that she would have been happier if she had let herself be lifted up to Edward's sphere of thought and interests.'

'Ah!' said Mabel, laughing, 'I hear her pouring out to mother all her bothers about Mr. Cobbold and servants and butchers, and how upset he is, when he is anxious about his securities. You really do dread a visit from her, don't you, mamma?'

'Impertinent child! Poor woman, she is of a low-spirited nature, or else the old gentleman at the farm broke her down, for she is always

nothing if not dejected,' said Mrs. Millar, who was always kind-hearted.

'But,' said Aline, 'you feel that to care about mission work and to sympathize with Edward would be more for her happiness than to fret over Mr. Cobbold's tempers, his securities, and his dinners.'

'Well, my dear, whatever takes us out of ourselves is good for us.'

The girls both felt that their mother was unconsciously an instance in point. Her hands were busy over a knitted vest to be sent out in a box for one of the North Canadian Missions, and Mabel had thoroughly infected her with zeal for the spread of the Gospel, as indeed the bundles of magazines on the side table might testify.

She did not look well, and Aline began to be anxious about some indications that Mabel had been too young to notice; but at the same time she looked happier and brighter than she had been since the loss of her little boys and her husband. She seemed to feel a consolation in her devotional books, and in the early Celebrations at the neighbouring church, which she certainly had not done before though she had always been a good, con-

scientious woman, taking religion as part of her duty, but not as her consolation. Now, however, the interest in the Faith, awakened by sympathy with her little daughter, seemed to be spreading into all her life and soul.





CHAPTER XV

THE LAND OF SINIM

Let not my parting tears
Grieve you too much, for every drop I shed
Is only filmed with grief, whilst all beside
Comes from the fount of joy.—JACKSON.

T was at an early Celebration that the Millar party first met Edward Bryant, who came out of church behind them, and spoke—his voice first recalling to Aline that it was indeed himself, his air was so much altered by a certain refinement of countenance and appearance, though there was nothing clerical about his dress. Mrs. Millar and Mabel, who had seen him at intervals more lately, were not struck, as the alteration had been gradual and insensible; but it was a most hearty and affectionate greeting, and he was delighted to find that Aline was at home.



*EDWARD BRYANT CAME OUT OF CHURCH BEHIND
THEM.*

‘ Will you come to tea, and bring your mother, and tell us about what you are doing ? ’ said Mrs. Millar. ‘ Then Mabel will be at home. ’

‘ At five ? ’ he asked.

‘ Oh, yes ; we have adopted town habits, ’ said Mrs. Millar, for the old hours at Langbridge had been of the farmer kind. ‘ We shall all like to have a coze over your plans. Tell your mother we shall be glad to see her. ’

Edward, however, appeared without his mother. ‘ Mr. Cobbold has sent home some fish, and if she goes out, he will be sure to think it neglected, ’ he said, with a smile, as he shook hands with Mrs. Millar. ‘ She said you would be sure to understand. ’

Nobody was able to be very sorry. They all knew that they should talk much more freely without Mrs. Cobbold, who would be sure to reduce them to discussing the failures of her last ‘ girls, ’ and the extortion of the butcher, and Mr. Cobbold’s indignation at the treatment of an old customer.

‘ So you have seen Archdeacon Goodrich ? ’

‘ Yes ; he stayed three nights at St. Augustine’s, and preached and talked to us. It was a joy to us all. ’

‘Did he know you again?’

‘No; I was only thirteen years old when he left the old Grammar School. But I think Mr. Fraser had mentioned me, for he asked for me, and spoke very kindly to me. He said he was rejoiced to find that the books he had lent me had borne fruit, and he hoped to see more of me. I don’t think I should have known him; he went away quite a young man, and now——’

‘Nearly ten years ago,’ said Aline.

‘He has a long beard, and is quite grizzled, and his complexion has a hard weather-stained look; but still, his head is grand, all the more because his temples are bald, but his eyes are—I can’t describe the nobleness of his expression.’

Mabel clasped her hands, while her mother said:

‘Has he not been ill?’

‘Yes; and the doctors tell him that it would be absolute suicide to expose himself to another northern winter. He has been at death’s door with pneumonia, and is still lame from rheumatism. It is plain that he has suffered terribly.’

‘Ah, there is a real cost!’ said Mabel.

‘It was worth the cost,’ said Edward. ‘It made our hearts burn within us when he told us of the Red Indian chief coming and laying his rifle and war insignia down before his baptism, and declaring that he renounced feuds and enmity together, and gave himself and his people to Christ his Lord and Master. Ah! and when we heard of the thankfulness of the poor English mother, in the heart of the Hudson’s Bay country, who had not seen an English clergyman for twelve years, when he drew up his sleigh at her little fort—he half-frozen himself—and how she rubbed him and restored him, and could hardly speak for tears of welcome and thankfulness. She had taught her children so well, too, and prepared them for baptism. They all knew their Bible, and all that the unbaptized could repeat of their Catechism.

‘What was the father?’

‘A big rough man who had had hardly any schooling, but believed implicitly in his good little wife, and had let her teach him. They had a quiet Eucharist together and now they will never be left so long. Archdeacon Goodrich arranged for their being visited every few weeks, and the man was

putting up a log hut as the beginning of what will some day be a church.'

'And that is the work the great Shepherd is doing,' said Mabel. 'Fetching His sheep and lambs in from every mountain where they have wandered.'

'But is not the Archdeacon very sorry not to go back?' asked Aline.

'He said he could break his heart over it, but for knowing that it must be ordained by a Higher Will than his, and being thankful not to be absolutely set aside from work. He is told that there is no reason he should not be effective in a warm or even a temperate climate, if he will take reasonable care of himself. So his mind is turning to North China.'

'I thought that Chinese missions had been chiefly carried out by the Church Missionary Society?' said Aline.

'In the South and about Hong Kong, yes. There has been a great work carried on there by the Bishops of Victoria, who had Hong Kong to work from. The S.P.G. was not able to begin seriously till 1878, but a famine relief fund, and the opening of the ports, has been much in our favour,

though we are still called "foreign devils"; but we have made some way.'

'There is a Bishop of North China, I see,' said Mabel, 'and it includes Pekin.'

'You always were up in Chinese matters,' said her sister, 'I believe it is your favourite mission.'

'The first I began to care about,' said Mabel; 'and there are most interesting books about it. There were those glorious girls, the martyrs of Kucheng.'

'Yes, their history always struck me very much,' said Aline, 'they were so perfectly bright and happy, full of merriment and yet devoted, and ready and willing in a moment to die.'

"Girls, girls, we are going together!" as one of the party called out,' said Mabel.

'And now their mother has offered her work in the same track,' said Aline. 'It has been a noble family!'

'What success has there been?' asked Mrs. Millar.

'In Pekin I believe the clergy have had to attend chiefly to the English families settled there,' said Edward; 'but the country districts have several stations which are centres for native

converts. But the bitter enmity of the Empress—a thorough old conservative as to religion and customs—retards matters a good deal, and men are very much wanted. Archdeacon Goodrich has been in correspondence with the Bishop, and I think he would like me to go with him.'

'You are not fit for a cold climate,' said Mrs. Millar.

'So the doctor said ; though I am very strong. But it will be better that I should be there to look after the Archdeacon ; and it is your favourite mission, Mabel.'

'Yes ; I am very glad you are going.'

'Mabel would like to bespeak a little Chinese baby girl, if you dig her up alive,' said Aline, laughing.

With which Mabel, responding merrily, went off to see that the muffins were being toasted and buttered. It was a very pleasant afternoon, all the party were in such full sympathy with one another ; and it was with a sigh that Edward rose to return in time for Mr. Cobbold's late dinner.

On the whole Mr. Cobbold was very civil to him, always in public, where he seemed to like to show him as a very creditable connection, though

without entirely giving up sneers at home upon the poverty of a clergyman in comparison with a rising merchant. The clergy of the town noticed the St. Augustine's student, and asked him to spend evenings with them, and once, when an intended lecturer failed, he was asked to expound a missionary magic lantern to a school. The subject happened to be North America, a part of the world of which he had heard a good deal. Aline and Mabel helped him to arrange the slides beforehand, and, though he felt very shy, they had a good deal of merriment over the feathered Indians, the great snow-shoes, the fur-clad squaws, and the chrysalis-papooses, also the teams of dogs with curling tails, and the flying sleighs.

Bishop Whipple's reminiscences were a fund of anecdotes, not S.P.G. indeed, but most interesting; and the three admired the nobleness and laughed over the quaint adventures as they had in old times laughed over Mabel and her 'natives.'

'Ah, if all the audience were like you!' sighed Edward. 'But think of the ages of them, and the sleepy faces, or the tittering if I hesitate or make a slip. Then I shall get worse and break down.'

‘No such thing,’ said Aline ; ‘it will just give you confidence.’

‘I wish it was you who had to do it,’ he finished, with a gesture of hiding his face.

But the lecture proved a great success. There was no lack of fluency, nor of good sense and depth, and, what was perhaps equally needful, of humour, and the applause was great. Edward said that he had been speaking to the eyes of Aline and Mabel all the time, though they knew most of it before ; but the expression on those appreciative faces was, as he said, everything to him, and gave him power to go on. So he told Aline as he was walking home with her the next day, while Mabel was gone to her pupil, and Aline answered, as she had often done before, with : ‘Nonsense ! how can you be so silly ?’

‘As if you did not know what you have always been to me.’

‘Come, Edward, this is of no use. It would only hinder you from better things.’

‘You know how it helps to lift me to the better things.’

‘Don’t ! The only good thing for you, pledged as you are, is to put me out of your head entirely.’

‘Could I? Or, if I could, would it not be a miserable isolation, cutting me off from all the home feeling and sympathy that I need to strengthen and help me?’

‘There is mother,’ faltered Aline.

‘Yes, through you, and carried along with you, Aline. I do not ask you for more now, I could not.’

‘No. I know that you were warned that this was the worst thing one of you students could do.’

‘To get engaged to some inferior person who would drag him down? Yes, I know; but you can’t call yourself an inferior person. You always were above me, and you have been educated, and are going on—you know it, and can’t deny it—in the way to lift me up.’

Aline had tried, on the back of a sob, to interpose at the ‘above me’ and the ‘educated’; and at the ‘lift me up’ she murmured: ‘Oh, no—not worthy—dragging down’; but it was incoherent. And Edward went on, ‘I am not daring to ask for an engagement. Everything is undecided. I may be an utter failure; I may be led away by the temptations they say there are sure to be; but all

I do long for is that you will let me look to you as my home guiding-star, with the light of sympathy, yes, more, the light caught from Heaven. And then, some day, perhaps, when my work is fixed, and all grown possible, that you might come and share it, and forward it as noble women have done.'

Aline's eyes were full of tears, and she did not utter her answer. Indeed, they were on the doorstep of her own house, and they went in together, and could not help going straight to Mrs. Millar and confessing, in broken words, half asking her pardon and consent for what they had done. She had seen what was inevitable, and had made up her mind to it, though she said she could not consent to their calling it a regular engagement. Neither of them must be bound. Either might see reason to break it off, without feeling it treacherous to do so; but 'You will let us hear of you constantly, Edward,' she said, and she did not specify to whom the letters were to be written, nor contradict him when he turned to Aline and entreated her to give him full tidings from home, letting him know all she was doing, and keeping his heart up, as he said.

The young and happy, yes, and those who have made such a beginning themselves, can well understand all that the two said to one another. There are sisters, too, who may know the exceeding joy of Mabel when she was allowed to understand, she who had been too innocent to put any construction on Edward's attentions to the family, nay, who had resented any possibility of earthly love, as spoiling the exalted character of a missionary.

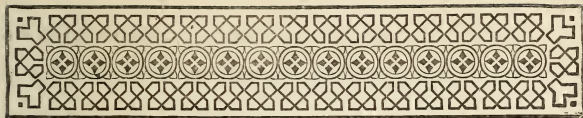
If it had been for anybody but Aline she should have thought so, she declared ; but, for Aline to have the chance of the honour of the work, oh ! it was too much joy.

Assuredly that joyfulness was shown in all her doings. She was the sunshine of her mother's house, as well as of her invalid pupil's room, and kept the girl interested and occupied by everything around, instead of listlessly pining for variety and ranging from novel to novel. Mabel had managed to infuse a soul into everything she did, whether for home or abroad, her own improvement or amusement. All was *for* something or somebody, and that was the charm. So, too, it was with the Sunday-school class. There was no teacher that they loved like Miss Mab. It was joy to be

promoted to her class, and the children waited at the end of her street to escort her to school and hold her hand. Their missionary boxes would all have gone for the North China Mission if she would have taken the whole. And when, once, Edward contrived to send home a box of Chinese trifles to be divided between her pupils and Aline's, how great was the ecstasy over the queer boxes, baskets, toys and dolls!

Aline was not quite so merry; but always cheerful, and, happily patient, endeavouring in all ways to prepare herself—soul, mind, and body—for the great duties to which she had thus been called.





CHAPTER XVI

TO THE FLOWERY LAND

Sing hey, sing ho, for the Land of Flowers.—LA MOTTE FOUQUÉ.



HE parting was over. Edward Bryant was suddenly summoned at last to meet Archdeacon Goodrich in London, make the final preparations there, and start with him and two other clergy for the Chinese mission. There was too much hurry at the last for a quarter of the things that each had to say. His mother cried bitterly, and said she should never see him again, and that he would be murdered by the Chinese for a 'foreign devil'; and when he said such attacks were over, but that if such a thing did happen, it would be martyrdom, she cried the more. Mr. Cobbold tried to console her by saying the 'young chap' was much more likely to make his fortune out of John Chinaman, 'if he were not a fool.' Many of your missionaries did, and took

care 'to live on the fat of the land'; and perhaps the boy would be wiser when he got out there. And he was to take care to tell in his letters the prices of tea of different kinds on the spot, to be compared with those in England.

Mabel was full of transport at the realisation of all her dreams. Edward really going out, and Aline likely to follow—it was too delightful. She had possessed herself of a Chinese Bible, and had tried to identify and illuminate some texts; but only one was ready, which Edward promised to keep carefully and preciousy, though he abstained from promising to put it up till he should ascertain from some competent Chinese scholar whether it were really correct and suitable.

Edward's old friend Andrews was thriving in his own department, and doing his duty there. He was quite willing to respect and admire his friend's devotion and enterprise, though he did not feel called on to join in it personally; but he gave a subscription, large for his means, to the branch of the mission, and desired to know if there were any way in which he could help, or, perhaps, any comforts he could procure and send out. He even promised, on the receipt of a telegram, to come to Southampton and see Bryant off.

Mrs. Millar gave a precious little book of MS. prayers and hymns, her own favourites. She also gave a mother's kiss and blessing ; but she said the less as Aline's holidays had just ended, and she would go up to London at the same time with Edward.

Yet this privilege did not amount to much, for the carriage was full, and they could only sit next to each other and feel each other's presence ; and they arrived in a scramble, where Miss Millar was instantly claimed by some of the other teachers at her school, and swept off by them with scarcely a word ; while Archdeacon Goodrich, disembarking also, and seeing Edward, pounced on him to introduce him to another of the party.

But, after all, what could conscious last words be, when much had already passed without extra emotion ? Each turned away from the other into the whirl of practical life, but with resolute hearts, fixed upon present duty and trusting to be made patient and strong to wait either in the field or beside the tent.

And strong resolute attention kept Aline to the little lessons and training sports of the children ; through the days when she knew that Edward was joining in a parting service at Canterbury, and when he was embarking at Southampton. Mr.

Andrews came to tell her how he had seen the party off, and she was very thankful for his account. He ended it with : ' It almost made me wish I was going too.'

'Doing one's duty at home is an acceptable thing,' said Aline, making an effort not to utter comparisons.

It was a time of waiting, indeed, though cheered from the first by the letters that in these days make separation so much less complete and painful than formerly. Mrs. Millar and her daughters knew when Edward passed Gibraltar, and how he had borne the voyage and liked his companions, feeling one with them ; and, by-and-by, when he arrived at Hong Kong, and the beings with pig-tails, long petticoats, and narrow eyes began to come upon him as realities, while bewildering pigeon-English sounded in his ears. He was a good letter writer, and his descriptions were a delight, more especially when, after landing at Shanghai and being introduced to the mission staff, the party arrived at Peking, with the wonderful walls, forty feet wide at the top, and apparently bristling with cannon, all of which turned out to be merely painted likenesses.

It was all a bewilderment (he wrote), the central street so wide and roomy, but crowded with carts, camels, donkeys, and passengers, who looked, to unaccustomed eyes, like a peep show, with a causeway in the middle, and mudholes on either side causing horrible smells, while the borders were brilliant shops and stalls, their fronts most elaborately carved, and kept by owners in rich brocaded silks, looking plump and contented, and bargaining in a leisurely, though intensely shrewd, manner.

Horrors there were in the background, acres of hovels utterly wretched and miserable, yet crowded to the last degree, and filthy, as indeed dirt and foulness spread everywhere, even to the more ornamental parts of the city; and walking, to a European, was a difficult matter where every dry place was thronged with the interminable swarms of people. Carts went round in the morning, not of scavengers, but to collect the bodies of infants too young for honourable sepulture.

The ancient hatred and distrust of foreigners had, however, been at that time much mitigated in Peking, and there was little or no fear of violence to strangers, as there was familiarity from the presence

of the British Legation, and considerable profit to be reaped from travellers.

Moreover, there were not only English services at the Legation, but a settlement of clergy, with schools for the boys and girls, who were more easily won among the poor than among the wealthy. There was a hospital too, under the care of a lady, and an orphanage; a really impressed Chinese congregation, and a staff of clergy and nurses, very insufficient, but still making a resting place.

Tientsin, near a harbour, was, however, the chief nucleus of the mission, and here Edward Bryant was to be placed to assist in the schools as far as he could, while getting conversant with the language of the Northern Province. He had already learned a good deal of the written language, which is fortunately the same all over the Celestial Empire; but every province differs widely from the next in speech, so that the spoken tongue has to be separately acquired. Aline and Mabel actually discovered the meaning of some of Edward's widely marked hieroglyphics before they looked at the key sent with them; but he added that he was told that to speak them as he had been taught in Hong Kong would be incomprehensible at Tientsin.



CHAPTER XVII

SADNESS AND JOY

The prettiest pebble will not buy a pearl.—J. E. JACKSON.

MORE than three years had passed, and Aline and Mabel continued to feel their life chiefly centred in those letters from the Flowery Land which came regularly, and after being passed from Aline to her mother and Mabel, were read to Mrs. Cobbold, who listened with increasing eagerness, and was delighted to know that her son had been ordained a deacon, and was conducting service in Chinese at various mountain villages in turn.

Anxiety was, however, pressing upon Mabel, as the house-daughter. She could not but perceive that her mother was slowly but surely declining in health, and less and less capable of

exertion. She vainly endeavoured to persuade her to see a doctor, and at last thought it well to write such a full account to her sister Frances as brought her and her husband Lawrence Richards on the plea of a visit.

Lawrence only stayed for a day, but that was enough to show him the truth, and to cause him to prepare his wife and her sister for the knowledge that their mother was suffering from a fatal disease, and had not many months at the utmost to live.

She had suspected this herself already, and was relieved not to have to give the first warning of the truth to her devoted Mabel, who heard more peacefully than had been expected, having been prepared by intuition. Indeed, the mother and daughter had come to understand each other so well, and to have such inner sympathy, that the shock was not so great to her as it was to Frances, though it involved to her the entire overthrow of home and of life.

They both wrote to Aline, whose summer vacation was not far distant, and who undertook to arrange for giving up her post at the same time. There was indeed a farther reason for resigning her appointment. It had come to light that a

small investment made by Edward Bryant's father, which had hitherto been a dead loss, and one of the stones which had weighted the family down, had become profitable ; and though there were not many shares, there were enough to secure a certain income. Mr. Cobbold strongly advised him to come home, and put matters in order, while he not only felt it right to attend to his mother's entreaties, but believed that he would now be justified in marrying, since a maintenance for a wife would be secure ; and, besides, there was an opening for Aline to be useful in the little town in China where his lot had been cast. His Bishop and Archdeacon gave him leave of absence, and after waiting for his ordination as a priest, he would be at home in about six months' time.

'Thank God,' said Mrs. Millar. 'Whether I live to see him or not, I shall know that all is well for my Aline's future.'

'So,' said the other mother, 'my son could have done much better for himself ; but that Miss Aline was always after him.'

This came to Frances' ears, and was repeated with great indignation. Indeed she thought it was a poor look-out for Aline to go abroad as a poor

missionary's wife, be expected to teach those stupid Chinese women, and be looked down upon by the fine ladies at the Legation, and the smart merchants' wives. And what was to become of Mabel?

'I have no fears for Mabel,' said the mother.

'Well, to be sure, Mabel may be always sure of a home with us, when she wants a rest. She can easily get employment as a governess, unless that young Andrews means to make up to her, as I sometimes think he does, they are so thick over Bryant's letters. And, by what I hear, he has a good salary, besides what is to come to him from his father.'

So far Mrs. Richards' suspicions were right though James Andrews, being a modest and diffident man, had not thought it well to disturb Mabel's mind with the great question during this time of watching over her mother's decline, though once, when he found Mrs. Millar alone, he could not help telling her of his wishes.

'My dear boy,' she said, 'I could not wish my Mab to be in better, more God-fearing hands. If you can win her, be certain that you have my blessing.'

'And do you think I may hope?'

‘I cannot tell,’ was the answer, after a little pause. ‘You must try for yourself.’

She said no more, for Aline returned, as the daughters never left their mother alone for more than a few minutes at a time.

Tenderly they watched, those two, for Frances had perforce to go home to her husband and children. At length, after days going by so quietly that they often forgot what was hanging over them, the end came suddenly. Mabel awoke to miss the breathing near her, and found that it had ceased, and the gentle, motherly soul was gone.

Then came the inevitable confusion and bustle, telegraphing to Langbridge, finding Mrs. Cobbold with them at once, and her tender pitifulness being such that they were always forgetting and calling her by her old familiar name, and when they begged her pardon, she did not seem to have been hurt.

The clergyman had been to see them, and as Aline was coming downstairs, she saw a parley of the maid with a young clerical figure, and at first was surprised that a curate should have been sent, and was shrinking back, when a voice struck her,

a pair of eyes met her own, and, in another moment, she was in Edward's arms. He had heard that his mother was with the daughters and had followed her; and after a few seconds of broken words—Aline felt forced to relieve him and lead the way to the darkened room where, in the midst of a scatter of black materials, his mother, Frances, and Mabel sat contriving in the sad way of a house of mourning.

The three sisters felt it due to the mother and son to leave them alone together, and as they stood on the stairs Aline said: 'Oh, Mabel, I feel as if it was horrid of me that my heart should give such a bound. I must go and tell mother.'

When, in their turn, Edward and Mrs. Cobbold felt that the girls should be left no longer to themselves, Aline was still kneeling by the bed where that silent figure lay, spent and still after the storm of tears that had come to relieve her.

All arrangements were in the hands of Dr. Richards, and Frances attended to most household matters; but the constant visits of Edward were an infinite comfort and support to Aline and Mabel during those few sad days, and he went with them

when they laid their mother to rest in Langbridge Churchyard.

The night was spent at Langbridge, Mr. Fraser gladly taking in the young clergyman. And there was time the next day for a walk with Aline to review the thoughts and aspirations connected with the scenes of their childhood, Mabel meanwhile letting herself be the victim and plaything of the small nephew and niece who considered Auntie Mab as their property.

‘It was just here,’ said Aline, ‘at the churchyard gate that you stood singing “Salvation, oh salvation,” and said you *would* be a missionary, and Frances laughed at you, and asked if you meant that, or a photographer!’

‘I might have made a better photographer.’

‘But you were in earnest?’

‘Ye-es, then I was ; but I wavered a good deal. There, under that hedge, when dear little Mab sat preaching to a congregation of dolls, how vexed I was with her for bringing lost purposes back to me.’

‘Mab has never swerved,’ said Aline. ‘She has worked and saved always, from pure love of the Gospel and the Master, and pity for the

heathen. I am sure that, if it can be managed, she will go out with us.'

'She would be a most valuable helper,' said Edward. 'It shall be managed, if——. But did I not hear something about Andrews? There could not be a better fellow.'

'Oh, yes, I know; I believe he spoke to my mother, and Frances will be sure to put a great influence on Mab in his favour; but I do not think she will give in.'

'No one knows what love will do in the way of changing intentions.'

Aline smiled and shook her head, though she allowed that Mr. Andrews was a very nice youth, very steady and well principled, and that Mabel always liked to talk over Edward's letters with him, and to exchange missionary magazines with him; but, as she said, he took them because he cared for Mabel and for Edward; she, because she cared for the work.

There was a good deal to be settled at Langbridge; and the house at Undercliff Road was not to be given up for six weeks, so the two sisters would return thither to overlook their things, choosing out what could be taken with Aline to

China, what would remain under Mrs. Cobbold's keeping, and what would be sold. Edward meantime would visit Mr. Fraser, the college at St. Augustine's, and the Committee of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, when he might, perhaps, be asked to act as a deputation for a time, to stir up interest in the mission work. And, at any rate, he would be occupied for the chief part of his furlough, and until the marriage, which must of course be in a rather short time. The Millar family would each possess a small income out of their inheritance from their parents, their mother's portion, and their father's savings ; but a fourth part would go to the brother who was settled in New Zealand, and who had written to offer a home to 'little Mab,' whom he seemed still to suppose a mere child.

But Mabel's mind was made up ; and before Edward took leave for his various journeys in England she had gravely and seriously laid before him and Aline her request to accompany them, and to assist in the mission work.

'You are sure that it is your real purpose ?' said Edward.

'It has been my most earnest wish ever since

I was old enough to know about anything,' she answered. 'You remember that sermon, Edward?'

'Do I not?' was his answer.

'And all the stories you used to tell me, about the sacred monkeys, and the car of Juggernaut, and the widows.'

'Indeed, I do, and how crude and monstrous some of them must have been!'

'How little we understood that it was just the seed growing up,' said Aline.

'Well,' continued Mabel, 'I always wished *it* and made schemes for *it*, and as I grew older, every geography lesson and book of travels seemed to strengthen the thoughts, though they were only air castles at first, but then came texts in the Bible, "How beautiful upon the mountains," and "How shall they speak, except they be sent?" and all the rest, more than I can go over; but you know them, Edward, and I have wished and wished, and read and read, and wondered if God would take me if I dedicated myself, and whether I ought. I tried to put it away while dear mother lived, but I think she knew and guessed, Edward. I do believe it would have been the same with me even if you had stayed at home, but now—now the whole way

does seem opened.' She had spoken eagerly ; but her voice here seemed choked, and the tears glistened in her eyes—as, indeed, they did in Edward's.

'Dear child—dear Mabel, I am thankful that there should have been such a blessing on our childish dreams and purposes. But I think you ought to remember what I have told Aline, and she is willing to consider, as my wife, that this Chinese mission is one of more danger than most, or indeed any, not from climate or disease, but from the fanatic risings of the populace, which the mandarins seem less and less able or willing to prevent and punish, but which are specially dangerous to women.'

'I know, I have read. They have horrid fancies about the poor rescued babies. But, Edward, you would not hinder any one from our Master's work for fear of the martyr's crown ?'

'No, indeed, Mabel ; it is only that it is right you should know the risk—the earthly risk, I mean—"Whosoever will save his life shall lose it."'

'Yes, you run the risk daily yourself, and are willing for Aline. You will take me, Edward ?'

‘ Let us offer our prayers for acceptance—that the desire may be brought to effect, as Mr. Goodrich taught me to pray thirteen years ago.’

They all knelt and prayed, uplifted, as it were, above common life ; but the prose of the undertaking had yet to come. Edward had to go to London for himself, and there would announce his intended marriage, and propose Mabel Millar as an accredited teacher to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and the Women’s Mission Association ; and she would have to present herself at the office in London to be approved and accepted. She said she did not need a salary, but he said it was necessary that she should be authorised and recognised as one sent forth by the Church of England ; and, besides that, supplies of books and other requisites might be obtained in case of need.

Before this, however, Mabel had to undergo what she had been led to expect, but which was more trying than she had anticipated—the offer from James Andrews.

She had not realised how much he loved her, nor, indeed, how sweet his devotion was to her. She did like him very much, and if her mind had

not been otherwise engrossed, conscious love would have sprung up in response long ago, and when she perceived the pain she gave him by her refusal, and his grief and horror of the Chinese cruelties, of which he, too, had read with dismay, she could hardly endure to inflict so much pain. Besides, as he said, 'Mabel, think of the blessing you would be to me and my home. Hoping for you, and looking for you, has lighted me up all these years. Your dear mother liked me and trusted me; and you would be free to do all the good you wished, here and elsewhere, if only you would let me make you happy, and be the joy of my life.'

'Oh, do not—do not make it hard for me. I have put my hand to the plough, I cannot look back.'

'It is hard, then? You are not pledged? Only, if you had not spoken—would you—will you—not think if you do not love me after all?'

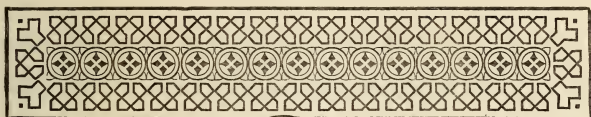
'No, no, no! This is what my whole life has been meant for. I am sorry to pain you, very sorry; but it cannot be.'

'And you can prefer those dull, brutal Chinese to——'

‘No,’ she broke in. ‘It is my Master’s work and call!’

And it was easier not to be shaken by Frances’ remonstrances—half affectionate, half worldly; but at last all this was over, and the mission party had set forth on a journey, which may be passed over, being all by steamer and railway till they arrived at Tientsin, a city looking out on the beautiful land-locked harbour of Chefoo, and with a continually increasing settlement of Europeans. Their place of residence, the name of which meant the ‘Bower of Bliss,’ was about twenty miles off on the hills, and thither they were conveyed, the ladies in closed sedan chairs, Edward on a jinriksha.





CHAPTER XVIII

WELCOME

Welcome to danger's hour,
Short greeting serves the time of strife.

T was a pretty village, lying on the side of a steep hill covered with bamboos and flowering trees. There was a narrow lane, with a brick wall on either side, and a door opened into a courtyard, with a fish-pond and artificial rockery, approached by a frail bridge with a zigzag railing, with gay flowers planted all round ; rooms with cane-latticed windows, and ribbed roofs with fantastic tiles, eaves and ridges bordered it. And when the three travellers had been carried up in open chairs by large-hatted, long-robed Chinamen, they were received at the door by their old friend Archdeacon Goodrich (in a long cassock, looking very English) ;

by an English lady (in a somewhat loose wrapping dress), and by two unmistakable Chinese, man and woman.

The lady, Miss Waring, held out her arms and embraced the two weary arrivals with the most eager joy. She had been spared from the dispensary and school in Tientsin to make ready the house with the help of the two Christian Chinese, whom Edward was greeting as old friends, almost as warmly as the Archdeacon.

‘I do not know whether we have met before,’ he said, as the bride was presented to him, and he warmly pressed her hand; ‘but here we all meet as old friends, especially when you come from Langbridge. And, truly, I am glad to welcome you,’ he added, next shaking hands with Mabel, ‘you will be a great reinforcement.’

‘It has been the longing of my life,’ she answered, blushing.

‘We shall find plenty for you to do,’ said Miss Waring. ‘Here you see is Loo, as we call her—a part of her Christian Chinese name—who will be glad to help you.’

‘My Christian sister,’ said Aline, holding out her hand, while Mabel ventured on the word or two

of Chinese greeting that Edward had taught her, and which evidently gave great pleasure.

These two were to wait on them, as, in fact, they had been Edward's servants previously ; and the house had been given to the mission by a Chinese Christian. There was a good deal more of court and garden behind, laid out in the same taste, so that, as Mabel said, it was like living in a magnified tea-cup ; but at present they were taken into the rooms with bamboo supports, and low table and cane chairs, to wash off their dust, and enjoy their tea, in tiny cups brought by Loo. She was a Tartar, and had never had pinched feet, but moved about in thick soles ; and both she and her husband understood a little English, enough to comprehend and to reply in that strange dialect known as pigeon-English.

The rooms had been attended to by the friends at the mission, and had an amount of home comfort that Aline and Mabel declared made them quite ashamed ; but the permanent fixtures had a good deal of the elaborate beauty and taste of the Chinese, and the view from the curiously latticed window and the garden was exquisite. Blossoming trees were near at hand, but a vista was

opened in them, showing the blue water of the land-locked harbour of Tientsin, the frill, or fan-like, sails here and there of junks cruising in it, and the smoky feather of an entering steamer.

‘Much too like home!’ said Aline.

‘Ah,’ said Miss Waring, ‘before long you will love it as your communication and protector.’

That evening was spent in hearing the latest news of the place. The Chinese monosyllabic name meant the ‘Bower of Bliss,’ and had been adopted from an inn round which the village had grown up, and which numbered about five hundred inhabitants, of whom at least a hundred were baptized Christians, more Tartar than genuine Chinese. Many more were willing to listen, as Edward had already found ; but they, for the most part, only did so intellectually, and were satisfied to say : ‘You have your sublime religion, I have my sublime religion.’ No fresh converts had begged for baptism in his locality during Edward’s absence, and when he inquired after one of his own, a young man of much promise, he was answered, half sadly, half triumphantly, that James Chang had sealed his faith.

‘How? They did not dare——?’ asked Edward, not ending his sentence.

‘Not avowedly for his faith,’ said the Archdeacon; ‘but, poor lad, he refused to help his father in that nefarious wayside gambling with dice that goes on at their inn in the town, and stood out against all commands or inducements with: “How should I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” till he was actually beaten to death—calling upon his Master to forgive his father, even like St. Stephen.’

Edward hid his face in his hands, between thankfulness and sorrow, as Mabel gasped: ‘Even as a martyr’; and Aline asked whether such things were permitted.

‘Alas! yes,’ said the Archdeacon. ‘I applied to the mandarin, and heard that the father has power of life and death over a disobedient son.’

‘Then none of our people will be safe,’ said Aline.

‘You are come to a cruel country, Mrs. Bryant,’ was the grave reply. ‘But,’ he added, seeing that the elder sister looked a little pale, ‘the neighbourhood of the Legations and the shipping

in the port gives us English much more security and protection to our people ! You see this was a legalised murder. If it were not for the old Empress we should prosper, but she is a regular *intriguante*.'

'She cannot stop the railway ?' said Aline.

'No, and that will give us an additional hold.'

He went on to explain that there would be a small number of Europeans connected with the railway in course of formation who would be grateful for Mr. Bryant's attention, and there was, as said before, a congregation of actual Christians, and there were women in various stages of hearing, civilisation, and conversion, to whom the two ladies would be invaluable ; and likewise at the school, which was at present taught only by a Christian man, with occasional visits from one of the staff of clergy at Tientsin.

To Aline and Mabel all sounded delightful—the fulfilling of all Mabel's dearest hopes ; and they were most eager to be at work.

In the morning, however, they were still at breakfast, when there was a tremendous noise, partly from instruments of all kinds, and apparently

playing all tunes in rivalry, accompanied with shouts, and up the lane came a troop of Chinese, their parasols waving above their broad hats. 'A deputation to welcome home Edward Bryant,' explained the Archdeacon ; and Edward, going out in front in the courtyard, was received with a speech from the foremost, and three scrolls were hung up on the walls, each covered with Chinese characters and containing the address.

After this, all the Christians proceeded to the church—which was really one of the halls of the house, opening into a court, with a fountain in the midst with delicate lilies, red, blue and white, adorning it—an ideal spot for baptisms. The sides were pillared and cloistered, and elaborately carved, and, within, the end most nearly eastward had been fitted up for an altar. Here a service of thanksgiving for the safe arrival of the party was held, in Chinese, which Aline and Mabel, after their studies on the voyage, were able to follow with their understanding as well as in spirit.

Afterwards Miss Waring presented them to one or two of the women, but she advised them not to go about among the houses or to the school

till they were equipped in the loose, shapeless skirts, and broad-sleeved upper garment of the Chinese women, who consider it as improper to wear clothes adapted to the figure, and would be prejudiced against the 'foreign devils.' She undertook to have the needful dresses sent up from Tientsin. Aline wondered to see no cramped feet ; but she was told these were poor women, chiefly, too, of Tartar birth, and that it was only the aristocratic ladies whose infants were put to such torture. She only knew a few in the city who had grown up with feet compressed to half their proper size, and, in the case of a Christian lady, the wife of a considerable shop-keeper, it had been a bitter struggle to give up the practice, and let her poor baby daughter spread her pink toes and enjoy life.

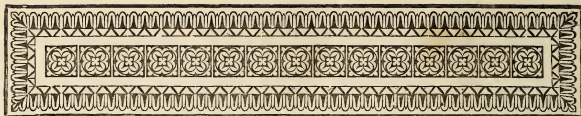
'It could not have been worse to ask a countess to let her child go barefoot,' said Miss Waring.

'But she did?'

'Oh, yes, in the end. Her husband, who has, of course, had his mind enlarged, and is, besides, a real Christian, insisted on it, and she obeyed as a duty. He *is* a good man.'

‘Yes,’ said the Archdeacon, ‘John Chinaman is hard to be brought beyond the merely convinced stage to the converted point ; but, when there, he has a substance in him that makes him of especial worth.’





CHAPTER XIX

THE BOWER OF BLISS

A blessed family is this,
Assembled in the bower of bliss.—SOUTHEY.

THE Bower of Bliss was well named. It was a very happy time that had thus begun in the lives of Aline and Mabel. The Gospels and Prayer-books were printed in Roman letters, though in Chinese words, and this saved them the difficulty of struggling with the strange Chinese hieroglyphics. A Chinese teacher was found for them, and they did not find it difficult to be understood. They went into the school with Edward, and found rows upon rows of little bald-headed boys with long queues, seated on the ground round the old Sing-Sang, or teacher, and looking just fit to

be packed up in a box, and sent off as curiosities to England.

Girls were not there, not being supposed worth education; and till the ladies came it was not possible to do much for them. Even the Christian mothers, whom the Kunions, as the ladies were called, visited, did not seem to think it possible to bring or send their baptized little girls to the hall in the house which had been set apart for a girls' school. The women, whether Christians or not, were all very civil, well mannered, and neat in their persons; but it was difficult to stir them out of any custom, and unless their husbands accepted the Faith, nothing could be done with them, and indeed, the Archdeacon, as well as Mr. Bryant, recommended that they should be left alone except in the way of kindness, such as offering medicine and treatment when they were too poor for the native doctors to attend them. They were modest, docile, down-trodden creatures, and could make and put on their own clothes as well as or better than the English ladies, so that there was not much to allure them with in the way of the arts of life. The head-dresses of those a little above want were elaborate studies.

The Christian women were, however, delightful to teach and hold intercourse with. To them all was now new life and joy, in the opening of hope for another life and release from dreary servitude in the present. They were in general far from unintelligent, and listened eagerly when the newcomers were able to teach them, and their behaviour in church was always most devout, and there was reason to think that, with most, it went beneath the docile and mechanical surface.

Of the men there was less to say, so far as the sisters were concerned. Edward spent much of his time in discussions in public and in private with the disciples of Confucius or of Gautama, who held the theory of morality, but lacked the motive power to apply it to their lives ; and in most cases had an undercurrent of national conceit which despised the foreigner, and even if the loathing of him, and all belonging to him, was overcome, they could go no further than believing that his religion might be good for him, even raise him to heights above themselves, but that theirs was the one for their own nation, to be held as good and faithful Chinese. The obloquy of a change to the hated and despised foreign Faith no doubt went

for a great deal with them, and also the absolute danger from their countrymen, of which they knew more than did the mission. Still, there were converts, and these dared enough to prove their sincerity and sterling worth ; and happy and blessed was the day when there was an adult baptism.

Boys of the heathen families resorted to the school of the Sing-Sang, or teacher, an old man, more than half-convinced at heart, and not unwilling to let the foreigner come in, take a class, and open their minds to something new. Even the Kuniongs were not unwelcome when they came in with the missionary, and showed pictures, even though the boys made no difficulty in telling them how much better were their own pictures of warriors, giants, and dragons, which certainly had the advantage in brilliant colouring.

But the little girls were Mabel's especial sphere and joy, from babyhood upwards. When once a Christian mother had been coaxed to trust a child in the power of Ma-Bee Kuniong, as the women learnt to call her, and it had been made extraordinarily happy with kindergarten sports, pictures, songs,

flowers, and verses, more little ones began to flock in—Christian and Buddhist—boys and girls alike, till they were about seven years old, when the boys of the unconverted were carried off to the hovel of old Sing-Sang, or, rather, held it beneath their dignity to listen to a Kuniong. All of them loved any amount of kindergarten ‘gifts,’ and exercise in the drill, the songs and other sports, and likewise in the Scripture stories that Edward freely allowed her to teach to all. A short prayer to the God of all nations began and ended the whole ; but the little Christians had some amount of separate instruction in the Faith, and learnt about their salvation and the benefits and obligations of their baptism.

All seemed to Mabel extraordinarily alike, both in face and character : she could hardly tell one from another at first, except by their size and the colours of their dresses ; and they were so quiet, so free from quarrels or tempers, that she longed to hold them up as examples to Sunday-school classes at home. She actually did write letters to her friends at Langbridge full of descriptions of their passive charms, and, by-and-by, of their wonderful progress. Was there ever an eager teacher

who was not delighted with the children's proficiency?

Little ones were, of course, less easily dealt with, and yelled if touched by any one save their parents; and in some streets of Peking, and in many of the more distant villages, there were shouts against the 'foreign devils.'

The chief industry of the place was the rearing of silk-worms, and on this the women were employed. The eggs were laid out on frames made of bamboo and the worms fed with shredded mulberry leaves, and during their growth the English were not allowed, even by the Christians, to come near them, since the sound of the foreign voice was supposed to agitate them so as to be fatal to their spinning, nor could they endure any close or noxious smell. There was a wild caterpillar besides, which was caught on trees, and produced a darker cocoon, whence a coarse kind of silk, called 'Ponga,' was made, and women and children turned out in search of these. Hawkers or middlemen came round after the cocoons had been spun, and purchased them, to be disposed of afterwards at Shanghai.

Most of the men were small farmers growing

wheat and millet, or, in the valley, rice, also tobacco
At the various harvests, at which men, women,
and children all turned out to gather in the crop,
the fields were a gay sight, while the classes were
deserted.





CHAPTER XX

MABEL'S VIEWS REALISED

The little babe up in his armes he bent,
Who with sweet pleasance and bold blandishment
Gan smyle on them that rather ought to weep.—SPENSER.



XCURSIONS were not encouraged by Edward, who had a strong sense of responsibility as to Mabel ; though, as she said merrily, there really was no one in England to care greatly about her putting herself into danger.

One expedition they did, however, make. A pair of English travellers, who had brought a letter to Edward from a friend of Mr. Fraser, and stayed at the 'Bower of Bliss' for some little time, persuaded Edward and his party to go with them, and a merchant and his wife, to the Great Wall, a journey which from thence could be accomplished in

a week, since English curiosity had led to the provision of conveniences for travellers, tolerable roads, and inns, with flowery names, where bearers of chairs could be hired. It was beautiful mountainous country, rocky hills festooned with lovely creeping plants, and overhanging precipices; but the wall itself was a great disappointment, being only a huge stone fence, zig-zagging over hill and through dale, and of its interminable length there was no means of judging.

On the journey, however, Mabel's vision was accomplished. Just outside a little town, very squalid, very poor and dirty, whence there were shouts and a volley of stones at the gentlemen who rode, and could be seen to be foreigners, the ladies, who, in closed chairs, had not been visible, and whose Chinese dress was in some measure a protection, had begun to recover from their fright, when a man was overtaken with two baskets hung by cords from a yoke over his shoulders.

Thinking they might contain oranges, the merchant, Mr. Bright, hailed him. He did not seem disposed to attend, but sulkily went on his way, and suddenly a cry proceeded from one of the baskets. 'Kittens to be drowned,' said the

merchant to his wife, evidently wishing to believe so ; but, 'No, no, it is a baby, a poor baby,' exclaimed Aline. 'Stop him, Edward, stop him.'

'You had much better remain ignorant, Mrs. Bryant,' objected Mr. Bright, riding up to her. 'Interfering is a fatal thing.'

'No, no!' was Mabel's cry ; 'save it ! save it !'

Edward was meantime parleying in Chinese with the bearer, who, as usual, was perfectly civil and impassive, and no doubt seeing the way to profit, made known that he was employed to carry four little girl infants to be disposed of in the streams that watered the paddy-field in the valley. The stranger Sing-Sang might have them if he liked, for a certain sum.

The baskets were opened in spite of the protestations of Mr. Bright, and two of the poor little white things proved to be quite dead. Another was feebly moving, evidently at the last gasp ; but the one whose cries had been heard looked stronger, and as if her life might be saved. Each little creature might be had for the price of five pence !

This Edward paid, while his two friends wondered at his thinking it worth while to purchase the dying child ; but he kept it in his own arms, with

his handkerchief over it, and gave the other to Mabel, who, happily, had a gourd of milk procured at the inn, and could soak her handkerchief and get a drop or two by that means into the mouth, which seemed to be sustaining to the tiny creature, who, however, appeared as yet to be so young as to need warmth more than food, sleeping when pressed up in Mabel's arms, while Mabel looked every few minutes to make sure that she was alive.

They were not far from a mountain stream, which descended into the rice-field below, and there spread out into a marsh. Here Edward called a halt, and taking off his hat, knelt and baptized the infant he had carried by the name of Mary. There was just enough quivering motion about her to show that she was still alive at the moment, and then he turned to Mabel: 'It will be safer thus,' he said. 'What will you have her called?'

'Bertha,' was her answer at once, for it was the name she had given to the mythical babe of her old castles in the air, in honour of the early Queen of Kent, and thus her brother-in-law called the little one.

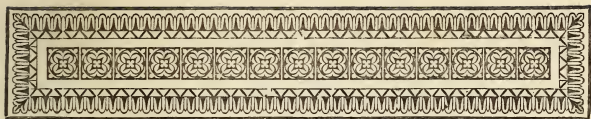
'That was worth the price,' he said to his com-

panions, as he mounted again, having laid the newly baptized Mary, now evidently dead, in his wife's lap. The answer was a grunt ; and, presently, after a few words with his wife, Mr. Bright declared that to carry the remains of the dead child was useless and objectionable, insisting that it should not be done. There was a small Christian station at the next halt for the night, and the Bryants wished to have buried the 'child of God' there ; but it was thought better not to withstand the general voice and incur suspicion on a change of bearers ; so, not without tears from Aline, a tiny grave was hollowed out beneath a wide spreading tree, and there the innocent one was left, while her sister in desertion and adoption rested all unconscious on Mabel's bosom.

It was a great delight to Mabel, the realisation of her childish visions. The opportunity had been wanting before, for the foreign influence and Christian leaven of Tientsin and the neighbourhood had so discouraged female infanticide, that, if carried on at all, it was in secret, so that in this first year it had not come before her. That Edward Bryant was equally glad might be doubted. He would have done the same in any

case, and he was thankful for the opportunity of rescuing and baptizing the children ; but Mr. Bright did not fail to impress on him that it had been a dangerous action, and he himself had seen Chinese papers representing ladies as taking out the eyes of infants to use them as magic or poisonous ingredients, and this horrible imputation was the cause of the specially rabid fury directed against the Roman Catholic sisterhoods ; but Tientsin and the neighbouring districts were so far civilised and Christianised that there was every reason to believe that the fanaticism of the secret societies would not affect them ; and he saw no reason for disturbing his wife and her sister in their joy at their achievement.





CHAPTER XXI

MARTYRDOM

Stand up !—stand up for Jesus !
The strife will not be long ;
This day the noise of battle,
The next the victor's song.
To him that overcometh,
A crown of life shall be ;
He with the King of Glory
Shall reign eternally.

LITTLE Bertha lived and throve, to Mabel's pride and satisfaction ; and, fortunately, she inherited the serene impassivity of the Chinese babes, and would lie quiet while Mabel was teaching, or busy in any way over the small and large children who thronged round the Kuniong Ma-Bee, as they called her, and imbibed her lessons with the docility of their race, and, having nothing to unlearn, readily accepted her teaching, learnt to say

prayers, and to respond and sing at church with more reality, she declared, than their contemporaries at Awmouth. Probably it was so from the freshness of the occupation, and, likewise, from all not coming as a matter of course imposed on them, but as an exceptional privilege possibly involving persecution.

Secret societies were reported to exist, and to have a mortal abhorrence of foreigners, and dark deeds had been done further south ; but since the occupation of the ports by Europeans, and the commencement of the railway from Tientsin to Peking, there was not thought to be any chance of the mischief spreading nearer ; and Christian villages were multiplying in the hills around, and more and more missions were undertaken by French, Belgians, and Germans.

Early in the second winter, a son was born to Edward and Aline, a powerful rival, they told Mabel, to Bertha, who was already beginning to toddle, and to talk in monosyllabic English.

They named the boy after his father, not forgetting that he was one of the many generations of Edwards, though probably he would never behold Birkfarm, except in the photograph, which Edward fondly cherished.

It was a hard winter: ice was visible in Chefoo Bay, beggars were found dead round the gates of Peking and Tientsin, frozen to death ; and Mabel's scholars came in shivering and almost frost-bitten. Houses were built with no appliances for warmth except pans of charcoal, and though the Bryants did the best they could with imported stoves and paraffin, they were very glad of the advance of spring with all its brilliancy of flowers.

Therewith, however, came reports that the more dangerous society known as Boxers, or Big Swords, were afoot, not fanatics, like the Vegetarians, who had made the sudden raid and slain Mr. and Mrs. Stewart and the ladies of Kucheng, but more political enemies, actuated by hatred of all foreigners. However, it seemed like other whispered distant reports that had been heard, and was not much regarded.

Baby Edward was already teething, too early, as Aline thought, and she wanted to show him to Miss Waring, or to the matron at the Tientsin hospital, who had experience in infant ailments, and would tell her how to manage him. Her husband, too, had some business with the clergy there, and had to give in his report ; so, just after Easter,

they resolved to go together and take a holiday for two nights. Would Mabel go with them, leaving Bertha safely with the good-natured Loo ?

No ; Mabel was much too busy. Not only could she not leave Bertha, but Chang and Ting too, and ever so many more, wanted to be made perfect in the Catechism and text they were to say when Bry Sing-Sang and Ma Kuniong brought the European prizes from Tientsin that the Awmouth children were sending to them.

She came out to the door laughing as she watched Aline and baby packed into a sedan-chair, and Edward mount his jinriksha to join the railway. The last sight they had of her was smiling and holding up little Bertha to wave her hand as Edward answered to her from his moving throne.

The last sight ! Little they dreamt that it was the last sight. It was the next day, and Aline, having taken some pleasant counsel over her baby, had just left him to sleep under Miss Waring's care, and was going out with Edward to call on Mrs. Bright, when they were aware of a dusty, disordered figure, which they knew to be that of one of the Christian peasants whose land lay on the

hills above their village. Holding out his hands as one in despair, he sobbed out the words in Chinese : ' Big Sword men ! Burst the village—slain all there.'

Catching up, but scarce crediting, the dreadful tidings, ' My sister ? ' were the first words.

' Slain ! slain without doubt. Church burnt.'

It appeared that Lois (the wife's Christian name) had gone out to feed her silk-worms at twilight, and as she stood high on the hill she could see the tumultuous rush into the village below, and heard the report of fire-arms (a weapon new in the Chinese popular insurrections). She called up her husband, but it was impossible to do anything except to hide in the rocks above, hoping that their house, which was a good deal shaded by trees, would not in the darkness attract the attention of the Boxers. And so it proved. It was a raid ; and after the village had been plundered and set on fire, the marauders departed over the hills towards Peking. After much terror and trembling, Mat resolved on going down to see what had chanced, since the fire had so died down that it could not disclose him to any lurking enemy ; but he durst not enter the village, though he met a boy of one

of the heathen families, who told him, with tears, that the Kuniong was dead, shot down dead at the entrance of the church.

So far, at least, was a consolation that Mabel had not been made captive, to be in danger of the cruel tortures of savage Chinese. Aline, who had stood pale as death, let her lips move in a moment's thanksgiving as she heard it; but no sound passed them. Edward, whose friends, infinitely shocked, had begun to gather round him, said: 'I must go at once and see how much of this is true, and——'

Voices arose that he could not be allowed to go alone, and two or three Englishmen and some sailors and others quickly fetched revolvers, and resolved on going with him. Archdeacon Goodrich, the friend of his boyhood, arrived in time to be of the party, who went as far as they could by train and then walked up the remainder of the hill. It was one of the first attacks made by the Secret Society on Christian settlements, and did not then seem to be more extensive than the Vegetarian raid on Kucheng, where there was no popular rising.

The result of their journey may best be told in

the words of Edward to Aline, when, by-and-by, he returned—white, worn, exhausted and battered. After the first facts had been confirmed, and he had been refreshed enough to tell more, he sat by her and spoke. ‘Yes, we found the dear one. We may be thankful over her, my Aline, not only for her Crown of Martyrdom, but that it was won without those horrors we dreaded for her. She was shot down at the entrance of the church. There was no mark of injury, except where the bullet had pierced the forehead. By God’s mercy to her, those fiends now use fire-arms. Yes, we can be sure. The compound has been burnt and destroyed ; but a beam had fallen over the doorway, and under it she lay untouched, only her dress a little singed, and her sweet face as calm and noble as ever.’

‘But the child, Bertha? You said——’

‘She is with good old Loo. It was thus : there was smoke still rising from the houses, and cries, but of lamentation not hostility, and we went on—coming to the ruins, with our own people lamenting and proceeding to find their dead. I must tell you who are taken another time. Oh, why did we yield to Mabel and leave her?’

‘No, no; don’t reproach yourself. We could not guess.’

‘The village is, as you know, so scattered that many escaped’; and he mentioned a few names dear to them both. ‘Thus it seems to have been, as far as we can collect. The alarm was given only just before the Boxers arrived, about thirty of them, with swords and fire-locks, yelling: “Death to the foreign devils.” They came straight on our compound, slaughtering by the way those who could not escape. The children were in school with Mabel. She took them through the church, putting Bertha into Loo’s arms, and bidding her send them off to the hills, as safer than their houses; and she began putting them out at the farther door, so that they might run through the fountain court into the garden, and so escape, telling them to be good and run away, and God would take care of them. They crowded one upon the other, and were not half gone, alas! when the rush of Boxers came on, yelling at her, and waving their weapons. She stood in the doorway, with faithful Joe behind her. “Let no man take thy crown,” she said; and, to the men: “Let the poor children go safe—I am the stranger.” And at that moment the shot was fired,

and she fell over the chair, so that she was not trampled on. Indeed, I think Joe managed to draw her aside, even as he was cut down, for he lay, barely living, a terrible spectacle, in front of her, and ten of the poor children—innocents—had been killed, there and in the court.'

'She was guarding them. Oh, my Mab, it was glorious ; I wish I could get to feel it ! It was always what she held up as best of all. My Mab, my Mab, my dear one ! And good Joe : he told you ?'

'Or, rather, he told Loo : he was too far gone to speak when we came ; but Loo, with the child, had gone no further than the reeds round the fountain which, happily, we had not had cut, and they were long enough to hide her till the slaughter was over, and the burning. As the murderers passed on and the flames diminished, she ventured out and found her husband and our dear one as I told you. We laid them and the children out on the stones, near where the altar was. The enemy have done less mischief there than could have been expected ; they did not understand enough, and the fire did not take hold. It is our own rooms where the havoc is. We laid them there, and the Archdeacon, with some of the faithful ones, have stayed to watch and pray ; but they made me go home to you. But, to-

tomorrow, early, I shall go up again, and we will lay her for her last rest !’

‘All she would have chosen. It was her own day dream,’ said the sister, with sobbing breath. ‘What I do believe her childish hopes always centred in—to give her life, her dear life, to her Master for His little ones was always what she thought most beautiful and precious! Now she has done it, my sweet sister, and I ought to be glad.’

‘We shall be able, in time, to think of her in the noble army of Martyrs,’ said Edward : ‘we who laughed at her childish enthusiasms ; and, as the Archdeacon said, as we saw the stains on the altar steps, depend upon it, this is the seed of the Church.’

What more shall we tell ? The end is not yet. Mabel and her children, and the other martyrs of the ‘Bower of Bliss,’ had the blessing of suffering for their Faith, and her sister and brother-in-law are waiting, still at Tientsin, to resume the work that she has made dearer than ever.

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